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Professional Identity in Canadian Student Affairs and Services

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Professional Identity in Canadian Student Affairs and Services

by

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Dedication

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Professional Identity in Canadian Student Affairs and Services

by

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The professionalization of Canadian student affairs and services (SAS) has evolved in the last few decades, but little is known about the nature of professional identity among practitioners in the field or how they develop an understanding of their professional identity. This dissertation seeks to address this gap in the literature and achieve a greater understanding of Canadian SAS practitioners by focusing on an analysis of their professional identities. To achieve these aims, this study utilized a qualitative approach grounded in a constructivist epistemology. Identity theory as understood from the symbolic interactionist perspective provides the theoretical framework for this dissertation, defining identity as "what it means to be who one is." Twenty-five participants completed an online questionnaire and a one-on-one interview. Participants included SAS professionals from across Canada, in a range of SAS roles at various post-secondary institutions, including both colleges and universities. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted in both English and French; an interpreter was used to assist with French-

language components. I found that for most participants, their identity as a student affairs professional was their primary professional identity, characterized by a suite of identity meanings and inclusive of one or more sub-identities. Multiple sub-identities were ranked at varying levels of identity prominence and identity salience, depending on personal characteristics and the context of one's work. The interview data revealed SAS professionals enter the field through direct and indirect pathways, creating significant diversity among practitioners' backgrounds, skills, and experience. The misconceptions many outside of the profession have about SAS, and the professional marginalization SAS practitioners often encounter were found to characterize the context in which a professional identity is constructed. The findings include a discussion of the various specific factors impacting the development of professional identity in Canadian student affairs and services. I also offer recommendations for practice and suggestions for future research.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Background

Student affairs and services (SAS) divisions of Canadian universities and colleges are involved in an array of programs, services, and advisory capacities that influence student success, the campus environment, and institutional policies and decision-making. While variations depend on institutional factors, the services offered by SAS divisions on Canadian campuses today may include: housing, counselling, registrar, recruitment, enrolment management, chaplaincy, student success, student judicial affairs, disability, career development, cooperative education, health, scholarships and awards, Aboriginal services, ancillary services, and athletics. Thousands of staff members across the country contribute to shaping their institutional culture and to supporting individual students. In spite of all this, there is very little scholarly research on Canadian student affairs and services, and even less related to the professional identity of Canadian SAS practitioners.

In the United States, by contrast, scholarly research in the field of student affairs and services is plentiful, with university faculty, graduate students, and practitioners regularly contributing original research to the field. While several studies related to the experiences, practices, and attitudes of SAS professionals in Canada have recently emerged in scholarly publications (e.g., Browne, Speed, & Walker, 2015; Seifert & Burrow, 2013), the nature and development of professional identity in student affairs and services in Canada is largely unknown as there is little academic research on the topic.

In the context of student affairs and services, professional identity refers to the sense of self that emerges as a result of the individual's interaction with social experiences common to SAS practitioners. The changing roles of SAS as it has grown as a profession in the Canadian higher education context, and the diversity of functional areas that exist in the field, have meant a distinct professional identity of SAS personnel has not always been clear. The professionalization of Canadian SAS has evolved in the last few decades, but little is known about how practitioners in the field develop a sense of professional identity or what the nature of their professional identity is.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Research on the professional identity of student affairs and services staff has been conducted in the United States (e.g., Bureau, 2011; Crim, 2006; Cutler, 2001, 2003; Helm, 2004; Lidell, Wilson, Pasquesi, Hirschy, & Boyle, 2014). Researchers in the U.S. have studied professional identity of SAS staff almost exclusively in the context of graduate education, since student affairs personnel in the U.S. generally enter the profession by means of a student affairs graduate preparation program. While courses related to the practice of student affairs and services are becoming more common in graduate degree programs in Canada, there remains a lack of specific student affairs and services graduate-level programs, and thus such a credential remains rare in Canada. Considering this and other distinctive features of the field of SAS in Canada, much of the findings revealed in U.S.-based studies related to professional identity are not necessarily applicable or relevant to the Canadian post-secondary education environment.

PURPOSE

This dissertation seeks to address the gap in the literature and achieve a greater understanding of Canadian student affairs and services practitioners by focusing on an analysis of their professional identities. Framed using identity theory from the structural symbolic interactionism perspective (Burke & Stets, 2009), this dissertation defines identity as "what it means to be who one is" (Stryker, 1980, p. 1). According to identity theory from this perspective, individuals apply various and specific meanings to themselves. These identities are based on the roles they occupy (e.g., spouse, parent, worker), the groups they affiliate themselves with (e.g., church groups, political parties, ethnic groups), and the personal characteristics they claim for themselves (e.g., outgoing, moral, hardworking). In brief, identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) seeks to understand and explain the specific meanings that individuals apply to themselves for the multiple identities they claim.

This study of SAS personnel in Canada is primarily focused on role identities because they are based on the roles (including professional roles) that people play, such as mother, friend, lawyer, doctor, or student affairs and services professional. A role identity is defined as the "internalized meaning of a role that individuals apply to themselves" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 114). Guided by this framework, this dissertation seeks to understand what it means to be a SAS professional in Canada from the perspective of these practitioners.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the professional identity of Canadian student affairs and services practitioners, and conversely how the professional identity of Canadian SAS practitioners defines the field in which they work. The following research questions guide this study:

1. How do Canadian student affairs and services practitioners make meaning of their professional identity?
2. How does their understanding of their professional identity impact their approach to their work?
3. What factors influence the development of professional identity among Canadian student affairs and services practitioners?

Significance

Professional identities are important because they have been shown to influence an individual's feelings of competence as well as an individual's decisions and actions (e.g., Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Costello, 2005). An understanding of the nature of professional identity and the factors that contribute to its development among Canadian SAS practitioners has several specific potential benefits. First, this study may provide stakeholders in relevant regional and national professional associations with valuable information as to what experiences, programs, and services contribute to the development of professional identity in student affairs personnel, thus informing the nature of the professional development activities they offer. Second, chief student affairs and services officers and other higher education leaders depend on the retention and development of

professionals in student affairs to fill critical positions at all levels of the organization. Understanding the process of professional identity development in student affairs personnel may help these leaders develop programs and strategies to enhance retention in the profession by ensuring that the best and most talented SAS professionals remain in the field. Lastly, the results of this study may offer faculty responsible for student affairs graduate preparation programs with insights useful in the development, review, and improvement of these programs.

METHODS

This study of professional identity among Canadian SAS practitioners used a qualitative approach grounded in a constructivist epistemology. Following a brief online questionnaire, one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted with 25 participants using Skype™, telephone, and in-person interviews. The use of Skype™ and telephone interviews enabled a geographically dispersed sample. As a Canadian-wide investigation, this research was conducted in both English and French. An interpreter assisted in recruiting and interviewing French-speaking participants and translated the French data into English for analysis by the researcher. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Verbatim transcripts were imported into ATLAS.ti and coded, along with the researcher journal and field notes.

DEFINITIONS

A *profession* is work that has shared goals, has agreed-upon standards of appropriate behaviors, provides a sense of community for those who do the work, attends to socialization and regeneration to properly train for entrance into the field, and continued

skill development (Carpenter, 2003). While student affairs and services is often referred to as a profession, this field has been and continues to be questioned about its status as a profession (Bloland, Stamatakos, & Rogers, 1994; Carpenter, 2003).

Student affairs and services (SAS) is a composite label for a collection of functions that exist to support the academic mission of colleges and universities through the provision of student services and programs (Nuss, 2003). Such services promote learning through both in- and out-of-classroom activities (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). The provision of such services dates back to the late 1800s as faculty abandoned duties outside of the classroom (Nuss, 2003; Rudolph, 1990; Thelin, 2004). In the United States, the term student affairs is used most frequently to describe this administrative division within colleges and universities, however in the Canadian context both student affairs and student services are common labels (Seifert, Arnold, Burrow, & Brown, 2011). Therefore, throughout this study I use the phrase "student affairs and services" or its abbreviation, SAS.

Professional identity is the result of a process of professionalization by which members of an occupation codify a body of ideas and skills, share cultural attributes including ethics and values, and receive recognition of their individual and group status. Professional identity in this context refers to the sense of self that emerges as a result of the individual's interaction with social experiences common to student affairs practitioners.

Professional associations are organizations that advance the interests of the profession. Associations serve various roles including professional advocacy, professional development, enhancing scholarship, and supporting networking with other colleagues across campuses.

Student affairs graduate preparation programs refers to graduate education programs specifically created to prepare persons to work in the student affairs profession (McEwen & Talbot, 1998; Nuss, 2003). While just a few such programs exist in Canada, the "Graduate Prep Program Directory" developed and maintained by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) lists 147 such programs across the United States at the time of this research (ACPA, 2015).

Universities in Canada are post-secondary education institutions created primarily for the purposes of offering degree programs and to conduct research. Their mission statements generally emphasize non-economic goals (Orton, 2009). Canadian universities are generally categorized as primarily undergraduate, comprehensive, or medical doctoral institutions.

Colleges in Canada are post-secondary education institutions that primarily offer certificate, diploma, and transfer or continuing education and professional development programs requiring less than three years of full-time study (Orton, 2009). It is particularly important for American readers of this dissertation to note that the terms "university" and "college" are never used interchangeably in Canada as they often are the United States.

Polytechnic institutes in the Canadian context are publicly-funded institutions of higher education that offer a wide range of advanced skills-intensive and technology-based programs, including four-year bachelor's degrees, advanced diplomas, certificates, as well as in-class training for apprenticeship programs (Polytechnics Canada, 2015).

CÉGEPs represent the first stage of higher education in Québec. Students enter CÉGEP after completing five years of secondary school, enrolling in either a pre-university

program, leading to university studies, or a technical career program, which prepares students to enter the job market. CÉGEPs are publically-funded and generally tuition-free (Fédération des cégeps, 2017).

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter has provided an introduction to the study by presenting background information and outlining the purpose, research questions, significance, and methods, as well as providing definitions of key terms. Chapter 2 contains an overview of the history of higher education in Canada, including a discussion of the nature of SAS in the Canadian context. Chapter 3 presents a review of the literature exploring various aspects related to professional identity and what previous research has revealed about its development in SAS personnel. Chapter 3 concludes with a review of the theoretical framework of identity theory developed by structural symbolic interactionists, Stryker (1968, 1990) and Burke (1980). Chapter 4 describes the methodology and research methods employed, including a description of the participant recruiting procedures, the data collection methods, data analysis techniques, as well as strategies used to ensure trustworthiness. The analysis of the data is presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 8 provides a summary of the findings as well as a discussion about implications for practice and future research.

Chapter 2:

The Canadian Context of Student Affairs and Services

This chapter provides an overview of the history of higher education in Canada and a discussion of the emergence of student affairs and services in this context. To further describe the context of this study, some specific comparisons in which SAS differ in Canada versus the United States are also discussed.

BRIEF HISTORY OF CANADIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The history of universities in Canada dates back to the establishment of the first institutions in Nova Scotia, Upper Canada, Lower Canada, and New Brunswick in the 17th and 18th centuries. The first Canadian universities were established under the auspice of religious organizations. Bishop Laval founded the Séminaire de Québec in 1668, which was eventually granted a Royal Charter as Université Laval in 1852, the first French-language institution of higher education in North America (Jones, 2012). Other early universities, including the King's Colleges – Windsor, established in Nova Scotia in 1789; York College, established in Ontario in 1827; and Fredericton College, established in New Brunswick in 1828 – were based on the ancient British universities traditions. These institutions were residential, tutorial, and closely tied to the Church of England ("University", 2015). The University of King's College, known simply as King's, emerged from the King's College at Windsor and, with a Royal Charter from King George III in 1802, became the first university in English Canada. Now located in Halifax, King's remains the oldest English-speaking university in the Commonwealth outside of Great Britain (Christie, 2012).

With the founding of Dalhousie University in Halifax (1818), McGill University in Montreal (1821), and Queen's University in Kingston (1841), the more democratic model of Scottish universities was introduced in Canada. As Hardy Cox and Strange (2010b) have explained, the Canadian higher education landscape continued to evolve and broaden in scope throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a number of key legislative acts were passed (e.g., British North America Act, 1867; Technical Education Act, 1919) and government involvement in the higher education enterprise grew. By 2013, Canadian higher education supported approximately 965,000 full-time and 327,000 part-time university students across 98 campuses and 533,000 full-time and 206,000 part-time learners in over 130 colleges and institutes (Statistics Canada, 2014). Canadian universities are generally public, and range in size from small undergraduate-focused campuses to enormous comprehensive institutions. Post-secondary education is largely under the jurisdiction of provincial governments, although institutions enjoy a great deal of autonomy in their planning and decision-making; their governing bodies include both faculty and students. As there is no federal oversight of higher education in Canada, there is no single Canadian higher education system, per se, rather there are 13 provincial and territorial higher education systems within Canada. With no national "system," there is also no national higher education policy and likewise no national quality assessment or accreditation mechanisms. Thus, other than the few general characteristics described above, there is sufficient institutional variation across the country making it difficult to make generalizations about higher education in Canada (Jones, 2012).

EVOLUTION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS AND SERVICES IN CANADA

Just as it was in the United States, the early days of student affairs and services in Canada was one characterized by the policy framework of *in loco parentis* (in place of parents), with strict regulation and discipline of student behaviour (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010b). The early decades of the twentieth century was a seminal time for the development of student affairs and services, as various administrative personnel took it upon themselves to closely monitor the behaviour of their students. This approach is reflected in the following comment from a former president of Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1939: "In respect of student social events some care must be exercised, for there are in St. John's, in my opinion, too many things which tend to distract young persons of studious purpose" (Hatcher, 1939, Social Events section, para. 2). As the number of undergraduates participating in higher education increased sharply early in the twentieth century, college and university presidents no longer had time to deal with the day to day issues of student life. As more and more women began enrolling as undergraduate students, parents, administrators, and faculty members were becoming concerned about their integration on university campuses. Mackinnon (2011) refers to the period between 1870 and 1920 as the advent of the Dean. Deans of women were among the first specialized SAS staff, starting at Queen's in 1918, with other universities rapidly following suit. These deans were live-in positions responsible for supervising female students; their job duties included enforcing curfews and dress codes (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010b; Howman, 2009). In the subsequent decades, As Hardy-Cox and Strange explain, student support was increasingly seen as a broader issue which required specialized staff. In 1945, the Veterans

Rehabilitation Act (VRA)—sometimes referred to as the "Canadian G.I. Bill" by researchers in reference to its better known cousin in the United States—provided tuition and living expenses for a large influx of qualified veterans. A total of 50,000 veterans received university allowances under the VRA, which resulted in doubling total university enrollment in Canada by 1947 from its relatively stable rate during the years of 1930-1945 of 35,000 students per year (Lemieux & Card, 2001). Universities began providing career advising for these older students, and the University Advisory Services was formed in 1946 (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010b). This was an organization that represented staff who worked with veterans to provide personal and career counselling; these services were not broadly available to other students. However, within a few years, the organization moved to include deans of women and men, and other staff who specialized in student support, and shortly afterward was renamed in 1952 as the University Counselling and Placement Association (UCPA) (Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers, 2016).

The period between the mid-1960s and late 1980s was one in which the focus on student development became the dominant model of student affairs and services practice, replacing the emphasis on *in loco parentis* (Bloland et al., 1994). In Canada, the higher education sector experienced dramatic change during this era. In the 1960s, societal demands and the needs of industry and business resulted in the creation of 15 nondenominational universities. In Ontario, the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) were created in 1965. By 1970 there were over 35,000 students enrolled in these institutions. Governments were starting to demand increased accessibility, while at the same time, decreasing funding for post-secondary education (Jones, 2012).

When combined, all of these changes had a significant effect on the nature of student affairs and services work. During this time research conducted by theorists such as Chickering, Reisser, Perry, and Kohlberg led to an understanding of how the interaction between students and the college environment affects the personal development of the student. This prompted student development educators to work towards the creation of positive environments that would provide both support and challenge for students (Mackinnon, 2011). Increasingly, staff members who worked to support students were being recognized as having a formal role in Canadian institutions. The UCPA was renamed the Canadian Association of University Student Personnel Services, then the Council of Associations of University Student Personnel Services. It formed autonomous divisions with which it was federated, which were the Canadian Student Services Association (CSSA), the Canadian University and College Counselling Association (CUCCA), and the Canadian College Health Services Association (CCHSA). The University Career Planning Association (UCPA) decided not to federate (CACUSS, n.d.). Factional disputes continued and the organization was finally reorganized as the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) in 1971, a title that has remained to the present. The factions and messy reorganizations that CACUSS has faced throughout its short history was noted by Hardy Cox in 2002:

> The evolution of a national student services organization in Canada has been challenging to its leaders and members. The challenge is to retain the real organizational strengths of this rich history and to build on them in the future. (p. 8)

Further changes to the divisional structure of CACUSS include the departure of the Canadian Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, and the creation of the National Aboriginal Student Services Association (NASSA), the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-secondary Education (CADSPPE), and the Canadian Academic Integrity and Student Judicial Affairs (CAISJA). These developments in Canadian SAS paralleled an increased consciousness of regional differences and needs, a perspective quite compatible with the historical provincial/territorial grounding of the higher education system. With this trend was a shift from a general focus on professional competence in the field to the value placed on specialized expertise. Consequently, this period of development in recent decades also featured a flourishing of various professional associations and activities that were more regionally established or specifically committed to the needs of particular student groups and the exercise of particular professional skills (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010b).

DISTINGUISHING ASPECTS OF CANADIAN STUDENT AFFAIRS AND SERVICES

There are numerous ways in which higher education broadly, and student affairs and services specifically, differ in Canada compared to the United States. Several of the contemporary issues in Canadian higher education that impact the work of SAS professionals include Aboriginal education, student engagement, accountability, and concerns about access, diversity, and inclusion. Two specific areas that distinguish the SAS profession in Canada, and are perhaps most relevant to the issue of professional identity of SAS personnel, are 1) the nature and scope of student leadership on campuses, and 2) the scarcity of student affairs and services graduate preparation programs in Canada.

These two aspects contribute to defining the distinctive nature of SAS in Canada and are discussed in the following sections.

Student Leadership

Although university faculty and administrators in the early days of Canadian higher education treated students in an authoritarian and paternalistic way, Canadian students have always been intentional about engaging in representative associations, providing feedback on institutional management, and protesting controversial decisions (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010b). These student behaviours continue to distinguish the Canadian higher education context. One early case of activism occurred in 1875, when some Queen's University students were suspended by the Principal for drinking off campus. Other students felt this was too harsh, appealed it to the university senate, and then began refusing to attend classes, resulting in a student strike that lasted about a week ("Student strikes", n.d.).

Student leadership on Canadian campuses of higher education, enacted through active roles in institutional governance, service delivery, and advocacy, has evolved in ways that are very different from other systems such as found in the United States. In the 1920s, university faculty in Canada campaigned for greater student involvement in university governance as part of their broader campaign to seize more power away from administration and into the hands of a collegial academy (McGrath, 1970). During the 1960s era of student activism, student leaders in Canada lobbied for greater representation in university governance, and were successful in obtaining seats on boards of governors and academic senates (Robinson, 2010). Interestingly, Earl McGrath, the United States Commissioner for Education in the 1960s and 70s, writing to an American audience,

referred to the example of Canada when discussing increased student participation in governance. McGrath (1970) observed that of 30 institutions in Canada, 10 had created positions for student governors and four more were considering doing so, and that in a large majority of Canadian institutions students were electing or appointing members of senates and committees:

> Students in Canada obviously enjoy an influential position far beyond that of most students in the United States. Canadian administrative officers overwhelmingly believe that students are making valuable contributions to the deliberations of academic bodies. (p. 34)

Furthermore,

> ...it would not be extravagant to conclude that the Canadian enterprise of higher education as a whole has become committed to the doctrine that students can and should play an important role in determining the policies and practices which shape their own higher education. (p. 36)

McGrath pointed out that the majority of Canadian institutions have adopted the practice of greater student participation in governance and also notes that Canadian administrators overwhelmingly see students making valuable contributions to their institutions in these capacities. McGrath notes the contrast with the situation in the United States at that time, when only a minority of institutions have student representation on their boards of trustees.

While the student activism movement of the 1960s was similar in both Canada and the United States, the efforts for increased student activism on American campuses since the 60s diminished to a greater extent than in Canada. Altbach and Cohen (1990) argue that what has come after the sixties has been an "anticlimax." They state that "the two

decades following the sixties have, in contrast to the decade of turbulence, been characterized by quiet" (p. 32). This decline is attributed to a number of factors: the end of the Vietnam War, the change in the economy with increased student job market concerns, increased enrolment in the sciences and professions whose students are not traditionally activists, extreme tactics by segments of the activist movement, a decline in media attention, and a shift to the right in American politics.

The decline in student activism in the United States is not mirrored to the same extent in Canada. Nationally, the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), a lobby/service organization made up of the majority of student associations in the country and with over 500,000 members, is an activist organization which undertakes extensive federal and provincial government lobbying, and which conducts research into student issues such as income-contingent loan repayment plans, corporate research funding, the effects of globalization on public post-secondary education, Aboriginal education, and tuition deregulation (Canadian Federation of Students, 2015). Another national but smaller student association, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), also works to bring post-secondary issues to the attention of the federal government. Founded in 1994, CASA has 22 student association members representing over 256,000 students (Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, 2015). At the provincial level, for example, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) was formed in 1992 with a mandate to lobby the Ontario provincial government on issues including student aid, tuition fees, government funding for university education, and university accountability. Eight Ontario university student associations are members of this alliance (OUSA, 2017).

At the institution level, all public universities in Canada have central student associations/unions, both undergraduate and graduate, that collect fees from students in order to provide services. The high degree of responsibility held by central student associations is one of the notable facets of student life in Canadian colleges and universities. Student associations are typically responsible for service provision, student life programming, and advocacy. Services and programs normally under their purview include the management of student groups and clubs, academic student associations, orientation programming, peer support programs, student union building management, bookstores, and campus pubs (Zuo & Ratsoy, 1999). As Robinson (2010) explains, student associations are also heavily active in providing campus-based advocacy and equity services that target groups of students, such as centres for women, Aboriginal students, international students, those with disabilities, and LGBTQ students. Other services commonly provided by student associations include "information centres or call lines, health and dental plans, legal aid, walk-home foot patrols, financial aid or bursaries, daycare, exam databases, transit passes, human rights, and academic and judicial advocacy" (Robinson, 2010, p. 90). On many Canadian campuses, the suite of programs and services offered by student associations is quite similar in nature to the portfolio managed by the institutions' student affairs division. Indeed, the total influence of student run activities and services is considerable, and the work of student leaders, therefore, can be very impactful to the overall quality of student life on their campuses (Robinson, 2010). Student affairs and services staff members work extensively with elected student leaders, and are often seen as the bridge between institutional administration and student

associations. In many cases, professional student affairs staff are involved in student leaders' training and preparation for their student leadership roles.

Graduate Training in Student Affairs and Services

Another distinguishing aspect about Canadian student affairs and services is the limited extent to which specific professional preparation is expected or required for entry and progress in the field. In the American context, SAS professionals generally enter the profession by means of a student affairs graduate program, which is largely considered a required credential for aspiring student affairs professionals (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Phelps Tobin, 1998; Winston, Torres, Carpenter, McIntire, & Petersen, 2001). The "Graduate Prep Program Directory" developed and maintained by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) lists 147 such programs across the United States at the time of writing (ACPA, 2015). Most of these programs host three categories of learning experiences that appear to be effective in preparing future student affairs professionals: a) foundational studies; b) professional studies; and, c) supervised practice. Foundational studies consider the profession's evolution, guiding documents, values, competencies and interdisciplinary approach. Professional studies include appropriate theories and frameworks as well as assessment and research. Foundational and professional studies often are emphasized through course work. Supervised practice includes such experiences as assistantships and practica, often occurring outside the classroom (Creamer & Winston, 2002; McEwen & Talbot, 1998).

There are currently only a handful of specialized graduate degree programs in student affairs and services in Canada, such as the master's program in Student

Development and Student Services in Higher Education at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). A number of other universities offer general higher education/post-secondary education graduate programs (e.g., Memorial University of Newfoundland, University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, University of Manitoba) with some SAS content. Memorial University's post-secondary studies program, for example, does have a number of individual courses on the administration of student services and student development theory (Hambler, Mason-Innes, Fitzgerald, Fernandez, & Verkerk, 2016). While courses and course content related to the practice of student affairs and services are becoming more common in the few higher education degree programs across the country, there remains a scarcity of specific student affairs and services graduate-level programs, and thus such a credential remains rare in Canada.

Instead of entering the profession with student affairs and services graduate degrees, most Canadian SAS practitioners enter the field with undergraduate degrees or master's degrees in a variety of other disciplines. In Robinson's (2011) study of values in Canadian SAS, she found that a significant proportion of the professional preparation that Canadian SAS practitioners do receive in Canada arises not from graduate education, but rather from experiential learning obtained during their undergraduate years while working as student leaders in student government or residence life, for example. While Hardy Cox and Strange (2010b), among others, have posited that graduate degrees in student affairs and services will soon become more popular in Canada, it is currently still a rare credential. This has implications for professional identity among Canadian SAS practitioners that

needs exploration. Many of the Canadian SAS professionals who do have specialized graduate training in student affairs have received such training at universities in the United States. After obtaining this credential south of the border, many do return to Canada for employment in the field, however some also take up employment at an institution in the U.S. and may never return to Canada to work (Mai, 2009).

Chapter 3:

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

LITERATURE REVIEW

What follows is an examination of existing literature relevant to professional identity in student affairs and services. First, a summary of research related to the consideration of SAS as a profession is presented. Next is a discussion of the nature of professional identity and how sociologists have described the process of professional socialization. Finally, drawing on research conducted in the context of the United States, an examination of previous studies regarding professional identity in student affairs is presented.

Student Affairs as a Profession

Before reviewing the available literature on student affairs professional identity, it is important to first clarify the significance of the construct of 'profession' to student affairs and its importance in the development of the current student affairs establishment in both the United States and Canada. The ways in which, and the degree to which, the field of SAS is characterized as a profession is important to consider as it may influence how practitioners perceive themselves and their work within the higher education environment.

The student affairs profession has struggled throughout its existence to justify its legitimacy as a profession. The issue of whether or not student affairs practice can be regarded as a professional endeavor has received considerable attention in scholarly literature (Coleman, 1990; Cooper & Miller, 1998; Strike & Ternasky, 1993; Taub & McEwen, 2006). Indeed, the question "is student affairs a profession?" has been a

persistent and compelling question for some time. To answer the question of whether or not student affairs practitioners should be identified as professionals, Wrenn (1949) examined this practitioner group by rating them on eight criteria and concluded that they had yet to establish themselves as professionals. The criteria Wrenn used are as follows:

1. The application of standards of selection and training;
2. The definition of job titles and functions;
3. The possession of a body of specialized knowledge and skills;
4. The development of a professional consciousness and of professional groups;
5. The self-imposition of standards of admission and performance;
6. The legal recognition of the vocation;
7. The development of a code of ethics;
8. The performance of a socially needed function. (p. 284)

In more recent decades, several other authors (Bloland & Stamatakos, 1990; Canon, 1982; Helfgot, 2005; Rickard, 1988) have revisited this issue and have also asserted that student affairs practitioners cannot be considered professionals simply because they work in a student affairs division. Helfgot (2005) stated student affairs appears to "lack a core, a set of constants that define their profession and its practice" (p. 6). This sentiment was shared by Jacoby (1989), who found that many student affairs professionals understood their work based on divergent views of profession, and that this lack of a shared vision and common mental models impacted efforts to reform and improve. Diverse perspectives regarding the role of student affairs within the higher education community had unfortunately created silos among student affairs practitioners and scholars (Hamrick, Evans, & Schuh, 2002), resulting in a disconnection between professional practice and theory and research. Bloland (1992) concluded that the vast diversity inherent in student

affairs functions would make it difficult to be recognized for certification, but the same diversity of functions serves to meet the needs of individual students, thereby serving the purpose of educating the whole student. Bloland stated that student affairs should relinquish its argument of being a professional field and recognize its important administrative role in supporting the academic mission. Continuing this debate about whether or not student affairs is a profession, Bloland cautioned, has potential negative consequences for the field. Bloland suggests that:

> Implicit in the question, and justification for its continuing examination is a sense of marginality, of subordination of student affairs staff in the academic enterprise. Implicit also is the suggestion that to be recognized as a profession would confer additional status along with concomitant benefits. The resolution of the question, therefore, is not just an academic exercise but, as is true of many other quasi professions, one which strikes at the heart of our identity and self-concept as well as the morale of the people who constitute the field. (p. 2)

Other scholars have similarly noted that the continuing interrogation of the professional status of student affairs perpetuates the message of marginality and fuels an identity crisis among practitioners (e.g., Forney, 1994; Jablonsky, 1998).

The student affairs profession matured in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, with much professional practice grounded in student development theory. Student affairs has responded to the growing needs of higher education and is no longer a function of services that faculty shed during the late 19th century (Manning, 1996). One myth of the development of student affairs, identified by Manning, was the "founded by default" narrative (p. 40). This default was described as services that faculty no longer wanted to

attend to and originated during adaptation of the German model of higher education. Manning insisted this myth is a historic notion and declared that student affairs exists because of a fundamental need and demand for student development and services. In the United States, student affairs is now generally understood as a distinct profession within higher education, with graduate programs, professional associations, journals, and scholarship.

In Canada, although there has been a move towards more professionalization, the field is often described as not being as defined as it is the United States. One participant in Robinson's (2011) study on Canadian student affairs values assessed the current status of student affairs in Canada saying, "we're in our adolescence" (p. 145). Other comments by participants in Robinson's study described student affairs as not well articulated and absent the constructs that are typical of professions, such as standardized credentials, a code of ethics, and a specific university graduate education program. In discussing the differences of the profession in Canada and the U.S.A., Tony Chambers, a professor of education at OISE commented, "The field is quite old in the U.S." but in Canada, student affairs is a comparatively young discipline and traditionally has been seen "as something that is a bit auxiliary to the central mission of the institution" (Tamburri, 2011, para 3). While Hardy Cox and Strange (2010b) have described Canadian student affairs as having "reached a point of maturity in recent decades that is impressive" (p. 17), the degree to which student affairs is understood as a profession in Canada remains questionable, even in the minds of those working in the field. The confusion surrounding how one thinks of oneself as a student affairs professional or explains his or her career to others poses a

concern because SAS professionals are often tasked with supporting and advising students on the very same issues that they themselves may have not resolved. For professionals in any field to be satisfied and effective, their career must be integrated into their identities (Holland, 1997). If SAS professionals are unaware of the interaction between who they are and their work, there is a concern that they are going to be ineffective in their role of helping to develop the whole student.

Toward Professional Competencies

Especially in the 1990s and at the turn of the 21st century, the lingering disconnect between what student affairs espouses and what is actually done in student affairs organizations caused some in the field to suggest that the effectiveness of student affairs organizations should be evaluated (Wheelan & Danganan, 2003). To address this call for clarity and unity in understanding the profession, many researchers in the United States, particularly in the last two decades, have focused on the issue of professional competencies in student affairs. A competency can be defined as "a combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task." (Jones & Voorhees, 2002, p. vii). As suggested by the literature, it is increasingly important to understand and update what competencies SAS administrators must possess to succeed on the job. Due to the increasingly complex and rapidly changing nature of student affairs work, the skills needed on the job continue to change (Kuk, Cobb, & Forrest, 2007). Arminio (2009) cited numerous applications for standards in student affairs including: continuous improvement, staff development, student development, program planning, program evaluations, acceptance of and education about student affairs services and programs. It has been noted

that student affairs competencies are affected by shifting demographics, economic conditions, and organizational effectiveness (Kuk et al., 2007).

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) has published a set of 10 professional competency areas for student affairs professionals. Their work built on prior sets of competencies identified by the Counsel for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2006) and ACPA (2008), as well as numerous empirical studies. This work, officially adopted by ACPA and NASPA governing boards, extends prior discussions of professional competence by providing outcomes and descriptions of each competency area that are "divided into basic, intermediate, and advanced levels that delineate the increasing complexity and ability that should be demonstrated by practitioners as they grow in their professional development" (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 4). The 10 competency areas are: (a) advising and helping; (b) assessment, evaluation, and research; (c) equity, diversity, and inclusion; (d) ethical professional practice; (e) history, philosophy, and values; (f) human and organizational resources; (g) law, policy, and governance; (h) leadership; (i) personal foundations; and (j) student learning and development.

Both prior to and since the publication of the ACPA/NASPA documents, competencies in student affairs have been examined by a number of researchers in a variety of contexts in the United States. Lovell and Kosten (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of 30 years of research in order to identify 16 broad knowledge, skill, and personal trait characteristics that were vital to success in the student affairs profession. Their

competencies were similar to those recently generated by ACPA and NASPA, though they did not include equity, diversity, and inclusion; ethical professional practice; or history, philosophy, and values. Burkard, Cole, Ott, and Stoflet (2005) employed a Dephi design involving multiple iterations of surveys with a panel of 104 mid- and senior-level student affairs administrators. The 32 competencies identified by Burkard and colleagues aligned well with the ACPA and NASPA competencies, though they did not include the areas of ethical professional practice or history, philosophy, and values. Other contexts in which student affairs professional competencies have been studied in the United States include community colleges (Gutierrez, 2012), Catholic colleges and universities (James & Estanek, 2012), entry-level student affairs work (Waple, 2006), senior student affairs officers (Dungy, 2011; Lindsay, 2014), and for those working in residential college settings (Baker, 2004).

In the Canadian context, scholarly research into the role and function of student affairs and services has been more limited than in the United States, however the increasing attention to this area of inquiry is evident by several recent reports and publications (e.g., Browne et al., 2015; Fernandez, Fitzgerald, Hambler, & Mason-Innes, 2016; Fisher, 2011; Massey & Massey, 2015). In 1989, the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services published *The Mission of Student Services*. This document articulates the goals and objectives of student services in the Canadian context, and "presents a philosophical and practical base for enhancing the experience of students in post-secondary institution" (CACUSS, 1989, p. 2). In this document, the primary purpose of student affairs and services is seen as:

> [developing] programs and [providing] services which support and promote student-centered education. Student Services professionals have expertise in assessing and identifying the factors that can enhance the development of students. Student Services personnel act as informed partners in the shared tasks of shaping and maintaining a campus community where students can learn inside and outside the classroom. (p. 3)

This purpose statement is student-centered and highlights the role of SAS professionals as partners in both inside- and outside-the-classroom learning. This *Mission of Student Services* document lists seven premises that delineate the values and assumptions that shape student affairs work in Canada. The premises articulated are:

1. The educational mission of the institution is paramount.
2. Quality of life in a teaching and learning community.
3. Each individual has worth and dignity, and should be treated with respect.
4. Post-secondary education must be aimed at an individual's total growth.
5. Learning is contextual and is influenced by a wide range of individual and environmental factors.
6. Student Services professionals are educators.
7. The educational goals of post-secondary institutions are best realized through a partnership of Student Services personnel with students, administrators, and faculty. (p. 3)

In addition to these seven premises, the contributors to this CACUSS monograph identify four main objectives or responsibilities associated with the mission of student services. These responsibilities are:

1. Shaping the learning environment.
2. Providing services to individuals and groups.
3. Pursuing operational excellence.

4. Promoting professional development. (p. 3)

These premises and objectives emphasize a holistic approach to student learning and development, and position SAS professionals as educators who work in partnership with faculty. The principles articulated in this 1989 document have remained relevant over time, as confirmed by later works (e.g., CACUSS, 1999; Fisher, 2011) and, as shall be seen, by many of the participants in this current study.

Hardy Cox and Strange (2010c) identified eight "best practices" in shaping student services in Canada. These best practices focus on understanding how students grow, learn, and develop, and include:

1. Centring practices in student needs
2. Expecting individual differences
3. Being flexible in our approaches
4. Responding to needs appropriately and on time
5. Anticipating needs rather than reacting to them
6. Applying resources efficiently and sustainably
7. Focusing on outcomes and results
8. Designing and implementing services integratively. (p. 237)

Hardy Cox and Strange (2010c) concluded their discussion of these strategies of good practice by calling for a more systematic approach to professional preparation in SAS in Canada. Fisher (2011) noted that, as a field of practitioners from a variety of backgrounds and with a diverse array of roles, the "professionalization conversation that has emerged within CACUSS in recent years is focused more on professional preparation and competency, rather than on any strict adherence to standards of practice" (p. 16). Massey and Massey (2015) conducted a CACUSS member needs assessment which investigated,

among other things, members' professional development needs. In their report, Massey and Massey outlined a set of recommendations directing CACUSS on how to move forward with meeting their members' various professional needs, including the recommendation to "establish a set of competencies and best practices for Canadian student affairs" (p. 78). Acting on this recommendations, CACUSS commissioned further research and analysis to develop a professional competency model, and, during the course of the present study, the *CACUSS Student Affairs and Services Competency Model* (Fernandez et al., 2016) was published. This model "addresses the skills, knowledge and attitudes required across all areas of SAS in Canada" (p. 6), and includes the following set of 11 competency areas: (a) communication; (b) emotional and interpersonal intelligence; (c) intercultural fluency; (d) Indigenous cultural awareness; (e) post-secondary acumen; (f) equity, diversity, and inclusion; (g) leadership, management, and administration; (h) strategic planning, research, and assessment; (i) student advising, support, and advocacy; (j) student learning and development; and, (k) technology and digital engagement (Fernandez et al., 2016). While many of these competencies were adopted or adapted from ACPA/NASPA (2010) *Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators*, as a whole they represent a Canadian-specific set of professional competencies to inform the professional development activities of institutions and associations, as well as individual SAS professionals in Canada.

Professional Identity

Professional identity, as one form of social identity, concerns group interactions in the workplace and relates to how people compare and differentiate themselves from other

professional groups. Professional identity is viewed as an on-going process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Professional identity develops over time and involves gaining insight into professional practices and the development of the talents and the values of the profession (Schein, 1978). It can be described as the attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs, and skills that are shared with others within a professional group and relates to the professional role being undertaken by the individual, and thus is a matter of the subjective self-conceptualization associated with the work role adopted (McGowan & Hart, 1990).

Holland (1997), a leading career development theorist, also emphasized the centrality of identity to one's development as a professional. Holland stated that professional identity signifies someone possessing a clear picture of his or her goals, interests, and talents. Regardless of career, a professional identity provides people with a vision of their career plans, their contingency plans, and their ability to implement these plans. For Holland, the concept of professional identity is closely tied to one's sense of self in both professional and personal capacities.

The development of professional identity is a process, or multiple processes, of socialization. Mortimer and Simmons (1978) defined socialization as a mechanism that teaches new members the values, norms, knowledge, beliefs, and skills that facilitate role performance and further group goals. Professional socialization influences individuals to develop a particular professional identity, focusing on an individual's movement into a profession. Sociologists have examined professional socialization from two perspectives, functionalist and segmentalist. Functionalists view professions as more or less unified and

organized homogeneous groups whose members share identity, values, and definitions of role and interests (Strauss, 1969). Segmentalists, in contrast, view professions as more segmented than homogeneous. They suggest that even within specialties within a given profession, smaller groups of members arise around small differences in work activities, definitions of mission, methodology and techniques, clients, colleagueship, or associations (Strauss, 1969).

The process of professional socialization often involves sanctioning of non-conforming behaviours and attitudes by reference group members and the acquisition of new attitudes from the reference group. Goslin (1968) conceptualized the process into three stages: anticipatory, formal educational, and organizational. During the anticipatory phase individuals in preparation for entry into training identify reference group members from whom they can acquire what they perceive to be the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the profession. The formal educational stage provides encounters with actual members of the chosen reference groups. This process is a highly interactive one in which old perceptions are discarded and replaced with the values and behaviours of the reference group.

Professional Identity in Student Affairs and Services

Since the professional identity of student affairs administrators has been largely unexplored in Canada, I draw on research from the United States to explore how this topic has been approached by scholars in the field to date. First I present some common threads throughout the profession that have been suggested as helping to provide a professional

identity, and then I review the limited work related to the actual development of a professional identity in student affairs practitioners.

Common Threads in Student Affairs

To have an identity, an entity or person must have collective values, customs, traditions, and beliefs (Komives & Woodard, 2004). For the diverse field of student affairs and services, one common thread is the concern for the values and moral development of students. Miller and Prince (1976) espoused that student affairs has a distinct common bond in the use of human and adult development models. SAS professionals utilize their understanding of human development theory to help not only students, but also themselves to grow and find their own identity (DeCoster & Brown, 1991; Komives & Woodard, 2004).

Another commonality in the student affairs profession is that of supporting the academic mission of the college or university in which one works (Komives & Woodard, 2004). Miller and Prince (1976) claimed that SAS professionals are crucial in the academic mission because of their contribution to the total learning experiences of the students. As much as SAS professionals have similar functions across campuses, each student affairs and services professional is uniquely shaped by the mission of his or her own institution (Komives & Woodard, 2004).

National associations, such as NASPA and ACPA in the United States and CACUSS in Canada, also provide links for the profession. Professionals come together through these organizations and often discuss issues such as their roles and purpose in student affairs and services, the changing issues college students are facing, and the critical

thinking component that student affairs professionals strive to foster in students (Williams, 1998). Frequently professionals attend conferences and come to realize that their concerns or approaches are often shared by other professionals at other institutions.

A final thread throughout the SAS profession is that one's identity is tied to being able to wear the hats of an administrator, a counselor, and a student development specialist (Rickard, 1988). The administrative role is exhibited when a student affairs professional works with budgeting, policy development, or managing an office. The counselor role is used when students need help with a crisis or need to be advised. The student development role is often used to train student leaders, teach leadership courses, develop programs, advocate for students, or conduct research. These roles are woven throughout all student affairs and services departments and offices. At an institution where the SAS professional plays a generalist role, he or she may play all of these roles on a daily basis such as the dean of students at a small, liberal arts college. At a large university where the SAS professional plays a specialist role, he or she may predominantly work with management aspects such as the student activities business manager. Even so, most student affairs and services professionals wear many hats throughout their daily work.

Development of Professional Identity in Student Affairs

The past research on the development of professional identity among SAS professionals has been conducted almost exclusively with respect to their graduate training in student affairs preparation programs (e.g., Bureau, 2011; Cutler, 2001, 2003; Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Liddell et al., 2014; Waple, 2006). Kuk and Cuyjet (2009) have demonstrated that student affairs preparation programs support the socialization of aspiring

and new student affairs and services practitioners into the norms and values of the profession, and asserted that this socialization is a primary purpose of student affairs graduate education. Others have shown that through graduate-level preparation in student affairs and services, a professional philosophy and identity evolves (Cutler, 2003; Manning, 1993). Manning wrote:

> Graduate students benefit from a personal philosophy that is focused enough to guide their work and rich enough to encourage their growth. A personal and professional philosophy also helps student affairs educators to define their work, shape their practice, and align the field with the missions of the institutions they serve. (p. 198)

Graduate preparation programs assist in developing graduate students' professional identity through course curriculum, philosophies, and values, as well as providing a community for students to interact and make social connections. The knowledge of student development theories, models, and concepts that influence work in SAS, including the values of the profession, gained through coursework provides a common language and a foundation for the profession (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009). Professional socialization during graduate education is also often facilitated through supervised practice, which is an "intentional effort to infuse experience into formal education, a component absolutely essential to quality learning" (Creamer & Winston, 2002, p. 18). Liddell et al. (2014) found that out-of-class experiences such as assistantships, practica, and internships were the most influential elements of graduate programs in the development of a student affairs professional identity. By offering practical experiences in student affairs and services, formal coursework emphasizing theory to practice, and problem-based learning, graduate

preparation programs can help socialize students as they transition to a full-time new SAS professional.

Although the student affairs and services field is quite diverse given the varied specializations within the profession, graduate programs provide experiences to inform students' shared interpretations of work within student affairs broadly and across functional areas (Carpenter, 2003). Research by Cutler (2003) and Taub and McEwen (2006) found that student affairs graduate students tend to share student affairs values. Taub and McEwen's findings in their study of 300 students from 24 different student affairs graduate programs demonstrated that individuals entering student affairs had common values reflected in their shared goals to support student development, make a difference, and work in a learning environment.

Crim (2006) examined the development of professional identity among senior student affairs administrators in the United States and described eight main contributing factors: graduate education and training; mentors; role models; work experiences; professional associations; gender, race and/or ethnicity; religious values; and family values. Aside from Crim's study which examines professional identity from a broad perspective, the majority of the literature investigating the socialization, professional identity, and shared professional values of SAS personnel in the workplace tends to be conducted with reference to how one may have experienced graduate education (e.g., Hirt, 2006; Laker, 2005; Magolda & Carnaghi, 2004; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Laker's examination of the professional socialization process in student affairs focused on how this process impacts professionals' conceptions of male gender identities. While his thoughtful

inquiry and analysis was not focused entirely on graduate education, given his study's research participants were new professionals and recent graduates of a student affairs preparation program, much of Laker's findings and research implications were concerned with the nature of student affairs graduate preparation. Renn and Jessup-Anger, after finding that the formation of a professional identity continued to be a major challenge for some new professionals, recommended that graduate programs use coursework to frame professional identity more explicitly.

The applicability of much of the research regarding student affairs and services professional identity to the Canadian context is limited, as the vast majority of student affairs professionals in Canada do not arrive in the profession with student affairs graduate degrees, but rather with varied academic backgrounds.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: IDENTITY THEORY

In this section I present a review of the theoretical framework used in this study: identity theory developed by structural symbolic interactionists, Stryker (1968, 1981) and Burke (1980). I refer to this theory simply as "identity theory" for the remainder of this chapter, although it is important to note that there is no one identity theory; there are several. As part of this discussion, I review the historical roots of identity theory and describe its fundamental tenets. I then describe the strengths of identity theory and why I selected it as the undergirding framework for my dissertation

The concept of identity has been studied widely across several disciplines by multiple generations of scholars. Identity theory has its roots in the work of philosophers dating back more than a century. James (1890) developed a theory of self that distinguished

the “me” self (the material, social, and spiritual self) from the “I” self (the thinking self, or “pure ego”). James also recognized that people have as many different selves as there are others who recognize them, a concept that has a direct influence on modern-day identity theory. Cooley (1902) proposed the psychological concept of the “looking-glass self,” whereby people imagine how they appear to others, imagine the judgment of that appearance, and then develop their self through the judgment of others. Within the interactional structure of society, Cooley emphasizes that it is the social network of primary groups that influences self-development. According to identity theorists, these reflected appraisals constitute one of the formative ways we come to understand who we are (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Mead (1934) argued that self and society are intrinsically linked. For Mead, the self emerges from social interaction. The self is essentially a social structure that arises in social experience and can be “an object to itself” through the activity of viewing oneself reflexively. Through interaction with others, we begin to develop an identity about who we are, as well as empathy for others (Burke & Stets, 2009). According to Mead, the self both emerges in society and is reflective of society; thus, the self is both individual and social in character (Stets & Burke, 2003). Put another way, the social process shapes society, self, and social interaction, and each feeds back on the others. Using the same terms that James (1890) used, Mead suggests an “I” self is continuously acting while a “me” self is continuously perceiving. These ideas form the basis of the symbolic interactionist perspective, the perspective from which identity theory has emerged.

Symbolic Interactionism

At the heart of symbolic interactionism is the importance placed on meaning and the view that meanings are not fixed or unchangeable, but are determined by how a person acts toward an object (Hewitt, 1988). In short, this premise suggests that people behave toward things they encounter in life depending on the meanings those things carry for them, and these meanings derive from and are shaped by social interaction and interpretation. The original or situational approach to symbolic interactionism views society as being constantly created through the interpretations of actors in situations (Blumer, 1969). This perspective views individuals as confronting a world that they must interpret in order to act, rather than an environment to which they respond. In other words, the situational approach to symbolic interactionism posits that "individuals are free to define the situation in any way they care to" because society is considered to always "be in a state of flux with no real organization or structure" (Stets & Burke, 2003, p. 128).

Stryker (1980) developed a structural approach to symbolic interactionism which revises Mead's original premise that "in the beginning is social process" to acknowledge that, although society emerges from social process, organized society exists before the appearance of all new members. Thus, the basic premise can be rewritten as "society shapes self shapes social behavior" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 285). Stryker's structuralism states that people construct their social lives through actions, meanings, definitions and interpretations of behaviour, all of which are directed at an external social reality (Stryker, 1995). Structural interactionism sees the effect of social structures as a process by which large-scale structures such as class, age, gender, and ethnicity operate

through more intermediate structures such as neighborhoods, schools, and associational memberships to affect relationships in social networks (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Stryker (1980) posited that people, through interaction, learn the "symbols that are used to designate 'positions,'" (p. 54) which are linked to what we conventionally call "roles". The meaning of the concept of role includes the idea that people "in specific positions are systematically influenced to behave in certain ways by social structure in which those positions are located," and this is a concept that "is deeply embedded in sociological thought" (Stryker & Statham, 1985, p. 332). Additionally, "roles are the major mechanisms linking persons to social structure, and persons are under heavy pressure both outside and inside themselves to conform to expectations" (Stryker & Statham, 1985, p. 333). According to Stryker (1980), people in society label others and are labeled by others according to the positions they occupy, and we also name ourselves with respect to these positional designations to the extent that we internalize them and they become part of our self. Stryker described identity as an "internalized positional designation" (p. 60) and has argued that one has an identity for each of the different positions or role relationships he or she holds in society. For example, the self as mother is an identity, as is the self as a Canadian, a teacher, a friend, and so on; each corresponding to the various roles one may play in society (Stets & Burke, 2003). Burke (2003) explains Stryker's concept of roles by stating that "we are thus identified and defined by self-labels in terms of positions in society" and that these positions "are tied together structurally and serve to tie individuals together" (p. 3). The role of mother is tied to son or daughter through structural positions in the family; the role of employer is tied to employee through structural positions in the

workplace; and the role of teacher is tied to student through structural positions in educational contexts. Stryker notes that given the multiple roles a person holds in society (mother, teacher, wife, friend, colleague, etc.), people have multiple identities. The self, composed of multiple identities, reflects society, and these identities, in turn, shape society (Burke, 2003). In sum, these concepts form the basis of identity theory.

Identity Control Theory

Building on these concepts and Stryker's work, Burke and his identity theorist colleagues developed identity control theory (ICT) (Burke, 1980, 1991; Burke, Owens, Serpe, & Thoits, 2003; Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Burke & Stets, 2009). Based on traditional symbolic interaction views, Burke and colleagues formulated the idea that people choose behaviours, the meanings of which correspond to the meanings in their identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). Compared with Stryker's (1968) approach, ICT focuses more on the internal dynamics of self and the concept of meaning around which identities are formed (Burke, 1980, 2007). The central question identity theorists ask is "What does it mean to be who one is?" For example, one might ask what it means to be a father, or what it means to be a Canadian. Within the ICT framework, the concept of meaning is understood as a response that a person has to a stimulus. From Mead, a symbol is a stimulus to which people share a common response. Being a student (the stimulus) brings forth a set of responses (set of meanings) for an individual who claims a student identity, similar to those meanings called up in others. These responses define for a person what it means to be a student, such as being academic, regularly attending class, and achieving good grades (Reitzes & Burke, 1980). ICT argues that "the meaning of one's identity has implications

for how one will behave, and one's behaviour confirms the meanings in one's identity" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 49). Continuing with the previous example, the common responses to the student identity lead to common expectations and understandings about what a student is and what a student does, as well as shared understandings about the relationship of student to teacher and the position of students in the university, for example. An individual's identity is verified when the meanings of one's identity in a given situation match the defining set of meanings of a specific identity for a person, known as the identity standard (Burke, 1991; Stets, 2005). Furthermore, when a person's identity is verified, he or she is likely to experience positive emotions, such as satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem (Burke & Stets, 2009). As a result, a person engages in "reflective appraisal" of the responses of others to these self-presentations, and when the responses of others confirm the identity standard, behaviours continue along the same lines that led to their identity being verified. If a person's identity is not verified, whereby the responses of others indicate that behavioral outputs are incongruent with the identity standard, he or she is likely to experience negative emotions that lead them to change his or her behaviour with the goal of controlling perceptions and aligning them to once more be congruent with the meanings of the identity standard (Burke, 2007).

Social, Role, and Person Identities

Identity theory from Stryker and Burke's perspective distinguishes among three different but interrelated bases of identities: social or group identities, person identities, and role identities. A social identity is based on a person's identification with a social group, which is defined as a set of individuals who share the view that they are members

of the same social category (Burke & Stets, 2009; Hogg & Abrams, 2001). For example, what does it mean to be a member of a fraternity or sorority, a union member, or being active in a professional organization? Social categories may also include nationalities, political affiliations, and sports teams (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). A social category into which one falls or feels one belongs, "provides a definition of who one is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category" (Hogg et al., 1995, p. 259). The assumption is that such group members share a social identity and, therefore, think and act alike. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985; Turner & Hogg, 1987) is primarily interested in social identities and argues that memberships in groups imply an ingroup (people who are members of the same social category) and an outgroup (people who are not members of that social category). Membership in groups helps reduce uncertainty for members by setting expectations about thoughts, feelings, and behaviours and can lead to feelings of positive distinctiveness; that is, the view that one's own group is better than another group (Hogg, 2006).

Person identities are based on the qualities or characteristics that individuals on their own internalize, such as how kind, considerate, or moral they are (Stets & Carter, 2006). Labeling oneself in terms of person identities means viewing the self as unique or different and distinct from others (Stets & Burke, 2003). Person identities consist of meanings that define for a person who he or she is as an individual. These identities operate across various roles, social interactions, and situations. Instead of being guided by social identities or role identities, what guides person identities is one's own personal goals (Burke & Stets, 2009).

Role identities are based on the roles that people play, such as mother, friend, teacher, or (of most interest to this dissertation) student affairs and services professional. Identity theorists view roles as providing structure and meaning to selves and social situations (Burke & Stets, 2009). Roles are associated with certain expectations that help guide people's attitudes and behaviour. For example, the role of being a friend may include expectations of being supportive, loyal, and reliable, and the role of being a teacher may include expectations of being educated and knowledgeable (Burke & Stets, 2009). The meanings in role identities are derived from culture and society as well as individuals' distinct interpretation of the role (Burke & Stets, 2009). In other words, individuals are socialized to roles but can also define for themselves what their role identities mean. As a result, different people may have different meanings for the same role identity.

Identity Prominence and Salience

As far back as James (1890), researchers are in agreement that people take on many identities over the course of their lives and can activate multiple identities at once (Burke & Stets, 2009). Similarly, individuals can attribute multiple meanings to their identities. Rarely, however, are multiple identities or identity meanings equally important to an individual. Depending on the individual and the context, some identities and identity meanings are more important than others and individuals rank certain identities and identity meanings higher on a prominence or salience hierarchy (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968).

Identity salience is defined as the probability that one will enact a specific identity across situations (Stets & Serpe, 2013; Stryker, 1968). As such, identity salience is a

behavioral indicator that represents an individual choosing to enact an identity (Stets & Serpe, 2013). For identity prominence, if one identity is more prominent to a person than another identity, then verification of that identity is more important than verification of the other. As Stets and Serpe (2013) explain, an identity ranking based on prominence characterizes the desires and values of an individual, and how that person wants to be viewed by others.

Applicability of Identity Theory to this Study

Identities based on roles are the identities of prime interest to identity theorists like Burke (1980), McCall and Simmons (1978), and Stryker (1980). Given their focus and applicability to work identities, like teacher, doctor, manager, and student affairs and services professional, role identities are the identities of chief interest in this dissertation.

A main reason why I selected identity theory as understood from the symbolic interactionist perspective to be the undergirding framework for this dissertation is for its focus on meaning, defining identity as "what it means to be who one is" (Burke & Stets, 2009). Past research in the context of the United States has examined a number of aspects related to professional identity in student affairs, including: how student affairs prodessionals are socialized into the profession and with the profession's values (Bureau, 2011; Laker, 2005); the socialization tensions experienced by student affairs professionals (Helm, 2004); and factors that influence the development of a professional identity in student affairs professionals (Crim, 2006; Cutler, 2001; Liddell et al., 2014). However, we know essentially nothing about what it means to be a student affairs and services professional in the Canadian higher education context. Identity theory's focus on meaning

equips this study to address this research gap and explore what it means to be a SAS professional in Canada from the perspective of SAS professionals. Additionally, the concept of role identity as the internalized meanings of a role that a person applies to him or herself (Burke & Stets, 2009) allows me to focus specifically on the ways in which Canadian SAS administrators describe their professional role identities. Finally, the concepts of identity salience and identity prominence are applied to reveal the extent to which the participants in this study similarly and differently rank their multiple professional identities and the meanings that they ascribe to their SAS professional role.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has considered a number of important issues crucial to understanding the profession of student affairs and services in Canada. Professional identity in SAS is complicated, and SAS professionals historically have struggled to define their work in parallel to other professions. The SAS profession in Canada is less defined than it is in the United States, and Canadian practitioners rarely enter the profession with student affairs graduate training. For these reasons, professional identity among Canadian practitioners may develop differently than it does for practitioners in the United States, however student affairs and services research in the Canadian context is lacking. By applying identity theory to the student affairs and services profession in Canada, a fuller understanding of professional identity in this context can be discovered.

Chapter 4:

Methods

Research on the professional identity of student affairs and services personnel has been conducted in the United States (e.g., Bureau, 2011; Crim, 2006; Cutler, 2001, 2003; Helm, 2004; Lidell et al., 2014), however there has been no published research to date on this topic in the Canadian context. The purpose of this study is to explore the professional identity of Canadian SAS practitioners. This section provides a detailed description of this study's research methods. Before discussing the specifics of the methods themselves, including the participant recruitment procedures, data collection techniques, and data analysis, I begin by describing the epistemology this study is anchored in, and by providing a rationale for the qualitative approach. I conclude the chapter by outlining how trustworthiness of the data was ensured in this study.

Analytical Paradigm

I believe that understanding emerges from an emic perspective and depends largely on context (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014; Merriam, 2009). I share the constructivist viewpoint that researchers construct concepts and theories based on the stories of research participants "who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences and/or lives, both to the researcher and themselves" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 10). In turn, this dissertation is anchored in a constructivist epistemology.

Because this dissertation aims to "step beyond the known" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 16) and see the world from the perspectives of SAS personnel, I selected a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research methods are especially useful to address research

questions that start with "how" or "what," examine topics that need to be explored, and present a detailed view of the topic (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research methods are well suited to uncovering meanings people assign to their experiences (Kvale, 1996). A qualitative approach, with its aim and ability to address open-ended questions and discover (not test) variables (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), will allow me to achieve what I set out to do in this dissertation.

PROCEDURES

By its very nature, identity is a personal subject, and it is also quite complex and multifaceted. This study focuses on the meanings participants attach to being SAS practitioners and, therefore, the ways in which they view themselves in this role. To uncover and explore participants' understandings of these concepts, I conducted in-depth, one-on-one interviews via Skype™ technology, by telephone, and in person.

Rationale for Using Skype™

Qualitative, in-depth interviews allow the researcher to tap into and capture participants' perspectives directly and openly (Merriam, 2009). Unlike informational interviews, observations, and focus groups, which typically do not provide an opportunity for the researcher to develop close rapport with participants, in-depth interviews enable the researcher to interact and converse with participants as an active listener (Jones et al., 2014), and to establish trust and rapport, thereby supporting a strong research partnership between the researcher and participant. Traditional in-person interviews are perhaps best suited to establish these aspects of the research setting, as sitting down with someone face-to-face can create a personal connection and allow the researcher to read important

nonverbal cues, thereby enriching the meaning of the spoken word (Carr & Worth, 2001; Hiller & DiLuzio, 2004). However, with the rise of video-based software applications, like Skype™, online synchronous video-based interviewing has become a viable option for qualitative researchers. Video-conference software lessens the drawbacks associated with other online interviewing techniques, such as via email correspondence or instant messaging protocols, and even offers some distinct advantages compared to in-person interviews (Hanna, 2012).

Skype™ is a free software application that enables communication by video using a webcam on a computer, smart phone, or tablet. In addition to family, friends, and peer communication, Skype™ has played various roles in education and research. Educational applications of Skype™ include teaching, learning, and team activities within online learning environments (Ryobe, 2008). As a research tool, it offers a novel interview method to collect qualitative data (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Sullivan, 2012). The use of Skype™ offered a number of significant advantages for this study. First, Skype™ saved travel time and money and opened up more possibilities in terms of geographic access to participants (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Hooley, Wellens, & Marriott, 2012). Researchers in the social sciences have acknowledged the Internet as a viable research medium for overcoming issues of access and distance for many years (e.g., Coomber, 1997; Evans, Elford, &Wiggins, 2008; Mann & Stewart, 2000), and recent technological advances such as Skype™ further advance the internet as a medium to create a functional alternative to face-to-face interviews (Hanna, 2012). Canada, like the United States, is a large and expansive country, and Canadian universities are spread over the entire breadth of the

country from the west coast to the east coast. One sampling goal was to ensure participants came from a variety of universities and colleges representing various regions of Canada. Travelling across the country to conduct interviews in person with each participant would have been both cost- and time-prohibitive. By using Skype™ interviews, however, it was possible to obtain a geographically representative sample that was not restricted by the logistical realities of time, distance, and funding.

In addition, recruiting participants who were employed full-time and scheduling in-person interviews would likely have been impeded due to the lack of time on the part of participants. As Smith-Stoner and Weber (2000) found in their work, participants who may not have time to be interviewed face-to-face are more likely to be willing to participate when Skype™ is offered. Thus, the use of Skype™ may have helped to encourage participation in my study by those with busy work schedules and other commitments.

Further, Skype™ interviews can feel more comfortable for interviewees because they occur in one's own private space, or in another location of the participants' choosing. Hanna (2012) confirms this Skype™ benefit to both the researcher and participants of being able to "remain in a safe location without imposing on each other's personal space" (p. 241). This can have the effect of the researcher and participant feeling less nervous and less pressured compared to an in-person interaction. Deakin and Wakefield (2013) also underscore the safety and security benefits of Skype™ for both interviewers and interviewees, and found in their study that Skype™ interviewees were more responsive than in a number of their face-to-face interviews.

In summary, using Skype™ to conduct interviews in this study offered some distinct advantages in terms of convenience and accessibility, especially considering the great physical distances between the researcher and many of the participants.

The French Component

In this dissertation, I have been intentional about including diverse voices, with participants from a variety of regions of the country, from different types of post-secondary institutions, working in a variety of student affairs roles, and at a variety of levels. Acknowledging that Canada is a bilingual country, with post-secondary institutions that operate in either English or French or both, I have also been intentional about including French-speaking participants in this study. In this section, I outline the rationale for including French-speaking participants and then explain the special research methods needed to accommodate French participants given I am an English-speaker with little to no proficiency in the French language.

Why Include French?

Since the Confederation of 1867, French and English have been the official languages of the Parliament of Canada. The *Official Languages Act* reinforced this duality in 1969, and then again in its 1988 and 2005 revisions. According to the last census data available, 58% of Canada's population consider English as their first language, while 22% declare French to be their first language. In the province of Québec, where French is the only official language at the provincial level, 80% of the population identify French as their

mother tongue[1], and 95% speak French as a first or second language. In New Brunswick, French is the mother tongue of one-third of the population (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Fifteen of the 18 universities in Québec and 43 of the province's 48 CÉGEPs are French-language institutions (Fédération des cégeps, 2017), with the exceptions including institutions such as Bishop's University, McGill University, Concordia University, and Dawson College. There are also several francophone post-secondary institutions outside of Québec, including Université de Moncton in New Brunswick, Université de Hearst in Ontario, Université de Saint-Boniface in Manitoba, and Collège Acadie Î-P-É in Prince Edward Island. A number of other colleges and universities in Canada operate as bilingual institutions, including several in Ontario such as University of Ottawa, Glendon College at York University, the Royal Military College of Canada, and Dominican University College.

While Canada's linguistic diversity extends beyond just English and French – 11% of Canada's population speak a language other than one of the two official languages most often at home (Statistics Canada, 2012), including many immigrant languages and over 60 Aboriginal languages native to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2015a) – it is English and French that dominate most aspects of society, including institutions of higher education. It is true that in Canadian higher education overall, English-language institutions outnumber those that operate in French, however, Francophone institutions still represent a significant part of the academy. Therefore, higher education research that seeks to be national in scope

[1] *Mother tongue* is defined by Statistics Canada (2015b, para. 2) as "the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the person at the time the data was collected."

must take into consideration the experience or phenomena under study in the context of both English and French educational environments. However, much of the published research in Canadian SAS pays little attention to either Francophone institutions, students, or staff. While aiming to be a national study, Robinson's (2011) investigation of the values of Canadian student affairs practitioners relies entirely on data from English-speaking participants without noting this research limitation. Seifert's (2014) study of professional development in student affairs and services in Canada looks only at English-speaking institutions. Seifert notes this limited scope in her study's title, but does not address this delimitation or any rationale for it in the paper itself. In the longitudinal study by Browne et al. (2015) examining national trends and attitudes in the field of student affairs and services, SAS administrators from French-language institutions were not represented in the research sample, despite the researchers' best efforts to recruit such participants. Hardy Cox and Strange's (2010) book *Achieving Student Success: Effective Student Services in Canadian Higher Education* has become regarded as essential reading for SAS professionals in Canada, as it was the first book published about the field of SAS in the Canadian context. This highly regarded edited volume, with contributions from practitioners and faculty based at Anglophone institutions, is absent of content specifically related to French-language institutions or Francophone students. The research and consultation process to inform the *CACUSS Student Affairs and Services Professional Competency Model*, recently completed by Fernandez et al. (2016), did not include any direct input from Francophone professionals, nor were any of the key informants Francophone (D. Fernandez, personal communication, April 20, 2017). It should be noted

that in a new edited volume by Hardy Cox and Strange (2016), which was published during the course of this research, there is one chapter devoted to the work of serving Francophone students. In this chapter, Joy and Lewin (2016) echo my assertion that studies of Canadian SAS that acknowledge French-speaking contexts are "virtually absent from our professional body of literature and available research" (p. 61). Given this obvious gap in the research, it is clear that future investigations of student affairs and services in Canada must consider the practice of SAS at Francophone institutions and the experiences of SAS professionals who work within these contexts in order to advance knowledge of the complete picture of the national field. With Francophone participants, the current study offers a beginning toward this effort.

While CACUSS is officially a bilingual association, the degree to which they meet the needs of French-speaking professionals has been called into question. The results of a recent study by Massey and Massey (2015) clearly indicate that CACUSS members from Québec feel significantly less engaged and less supported than members from other regions of the country, which these members attribute, at least in part, to inadequate communication from the association itself. At the time of this research, the CACUSS website is almost entirely in English only, and the professional development materials made available online by CACUSS in the form of presentations and webinars are offered in English only. As well-meaning as CACUSS is in terms of being inclusive and serving the diversity of their membership, their inability to fully meet the needs of their French-speaking membership, perhaps due to limited funds and French-language resources, is another example of the marginalization of French-speaking SAS practitioners within the

profession in Canada. I am aware that current efforts are underway to update the CACUSS website with more French material and to develop a more intentional plan to serve Francophone professionals.

Given that the scope of the current study is Canada-wide, and not restricted to English-speaking regions of Canada, English-speaking institutions, or English-speaking participants, I decided to actively recruit both English and French-speaking participants. While most of this study's participants were first-language English speakers, or otherwise fully proficient in speaking English and expressed a preference for the interview to be conducted in English, I did recruit three French-speaking participants who had limited English proficiency and preferred to communicate in French. The need to communicate with these participants was conceived not only as a practical necessity to obtain as diverse a sample as possible, but also as an ethical obligation to access the voices of those who are too often left out.

Translation and Use of an Interpreter

When a language barrier exists between qualitative researchers and their participants, unique research challenges are faced. Commonly, researchers employ interpreters or translators to overcome a language barrier (Edwards, 1998; Temple, 2002; Temple & Young, 2004). Some qualitative researchers and scholars, however, caution against the use of interpreters and translators. As Kapborg and Berterö (2002) point out, using interpreters to conduct interviews, transcribe, or analyze interview recordings could lead to questions about validity. For example, Usunier (1998) suggests that an interpreter represents an outsider to the research process that "produces noise, artificiality and an

absence of tempo" (p. 92). To avoid the use of an interpreter or translator in this study, one option would have been to conduct the interviews with all participants in English, provided the French-speakers also spoke English as a second language. It is true that many Francophone Canadians are fully bilingual, and others have enough English proficiency to express themselves moderately well in English. However, even if this study's French-speaking participants were able to communicate adequately in English to allow for an English-language interview, the extra effort required by participants to be interviewed in their second language, especially with respect to sensitive or complex topics, can result in impoverished accounts (Westmeyer, 1990). This can also call into question the grounded accuracy and value of the data (Marshall & Whille, 1994). Researchers have found that when interviewees speak in a second language they perceive themselves as less confident, happy, and intelligent (Kline, Acosta, Austin, & Johnson, 1980; de Zelueta, 1990). In addition, exclusively English interviews would necessarily prevent participation by those who do not speak English at all and deter the participation of those who feel uncomfortable in being interviewed using their second language. To allow individuals whose first language does not match the language of the researcher to fully express themselves, many qualitative researchers and scholars (e.g., Andrews, 1995; Tsang, 1998) suggest the use of an interpreter. Given my own limitation as a unilingual Anglophone researcher, I decided that it was necessary to use an interpreter to assist with the French-language components of this study, including translating my recruitment email message, consent form, and pre-interview questionnaire into French, as well as conducting and transcribing the French interviews. Edwards (1998) and Squires (2009) have indicated that the trustworthiness of

the data and the overall rigor of a study is decreased when researchers fail to systematically address the methodological issues arising from the use of translators and interpreters. Thus, I acknowledged that a variety of practical issues needed to be considered before moving forward with the French components of this study, including: finding an interpreter; briefing the interpreter; and identifying the role of each conversant in the interview process. The following short sections outline the decisions made regarding these tasks, informed by the available body of literature relating to the use of interpreters and translators in qualitative research.

Finding an Interpreter

In searching for a suitable interpreter, I had several preferred qualifications and characteristics in mind. First, the interpreter needed to be fully fluent in both English and French and have experience working as an interpreter. Expert language competence and interpreter experience is important to ensure the individual has the ability to communicate between languages using complex sentence structures, a high level of vocabulary, and the ability to describe concepts or words when they do not know the actual word or phrase (Westermeyer, 1990). Second, I sought an interpreter who had experience with qualitative research. This would ensure a certain level of knowledge and skill with respect to interviewing participants and ethical issues related to confidentiality, for example. As a third requirement, the interpreter should have at least a familiarity with higher education in Canada and the profession of SAS, to facilitate understanding and accurate translation of the concepts and specific terminology that could arise during the interviews.

With these preferred qualifications and traits in mind, I used my network of colleagues to ask for recommendations of a suitable interpreter. Several names were provided to me, and I was able to recruit my first choice, Claire. Claire is a retired university professor, and formerly held a faculty position as a Professor of French at an English-language Canadian university. Her first language is French and she is also fully fluent in English. Her experience working at a Canadian university as a professor provides her with a familiarity of Canadian higher education and with the work of student affairs and services. In addition, she has experience with qualitative research, including conducting in-depth interviews. Claire also has previous experience working as a translator and interpreter in collaboration with other English-speaking researchers. For all these reasons, Claire is an ideal interpreter for this study. Initially, we communicated by email to discuss the nature of the work, the timeline of the project, and the agreed compensation for Claire's time.

Briefing the Interpreter

When interviews are conducted with an interpreter, this person is as much a part of the research process as the researcher (Temple, 2002). The interpreter must therefore be well informed about the aim of the interview (Kapborg & Berterö, 2002; Patton, 2002) and be competent in the research domain being investigated, since they are being used as a research tool (Kvale, 1996). I met with my interpreter for several hours to prepare for the interview process, consistent with recommendations by Adamson and Donovan (2002), Freed (1988), and Murray and Wynne (2001). Claire and I met in person several weeks before the first French interview. Our preparatory session included discussions about the

purpose and background of my study, my research questions, the goal of the qualitative interviews, and ethical procedures, including informed consent and confidentiality. As part of this conversation, Claire signed a confidentiality agreement.

I had previously emailed Claire documents to be translated, including my recruitment email message, consent form, pre-interview questionnaire, and interview guide. During our meeting, we also reviewed the translated documents and resolved any outstanding questions about their accuracy. Not only did this meeting allow us to clarify the nature of the research and function of the interview, but it also allowed us to get to know one another. We discussed Claire's high school teaching background as well as her work as a university professor. She shared with me her experiences of working with student affairs staff to support her own students' learning needs. Through our conversation I was able to further confirm Claire's suitability as an appropriate interpreter for this research study. During this initial meeting, we also discussed and made plans regarding the precise role Claire would play during the actual interviews. The decisions we made in this regard are discussed in the following section about identifying the roles of the researcher and interpreter.

Role Identification

Researchers with experience conducting interpreter-facilitated qualitative interviews have examined and debated the appropriate role of interpreters and the degree to which they should actively participate in studies involving cross-language data generation processes. One approach is to use an interpreter to provide a sort of back and forth verbatim translation between researcher and participant, in which the interpreter acts

only as a passive conduit for the conversation. In contrast, interpreters can also operate more independently in an active way, to the extent that they are directing the interview on behalf of the researcher. Pitchforth and van Teijlingen (2005), who have used interpreters in both the passive and active roles, have indicated the advantage of the more active role is increased rapport and flow in the interviews, while the advantage of the passive role is increased control over the interview. Due to my interpreter's familiarity with the research topic, her experience conducting in-depth qualitative interviews, and my overall confidence in her ability to effectively direct the interview, we decided that she would play an active role in the interview process by conducting the interview in a largely independent way. Some researchers recommend a relatively limited amount of independence with interpreters asking scripted interview questions and only following up with probes as directed by the researcher (Freed, 1988; Kapborg & Berterö, 2002). In contrast, other researchers argue that it is important for interpreters to use their own judgment about the use of probes (Adamson & Donovan, 2002; Edwards, 1998). While I would be present with Claire during the French-language interviews, and she would therefore be able to consult with me when necessary, we agreed that she would ask the interview questions according to the interview guide as well as follow up with probing questions as she saw fit. I did caution Claire, however, to check with me first should any sensitive issues arise during the interviews, or if any unfamiliar topics arose.

Participant Recruitment

To select the research participants, purposeful sampling methods were employed. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and

selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). According to Patton:

> Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002, p. 230, emphasis in original).

Criterion sampling was the type of purposeful method used in this study, combined with snowballing techniques. Criterion sampling is the process of finding individuals that meet certain criteria defined by the researcher and by the purpose or topic of the study (Creswell, 2009). The primary criterion for participation in this study was that the participants be currently employed in a SAS role at a Canadian university or college. Another criterion was that the participants must have worked within Canadian SAS for at least five years since it was anticipated that practitioners with more experience would be in a better position to speak to how their conception of their professional identity had developed and changed over time. In addition, this years-of-service criterion ensures that all my participants have more relevant experiences on which to reflect when thinking about their professional identity than would someone brand new to the field.

Using my knowledge of the student affairs and services field in Canada, I identified three key contacts within the field and asked these gatekeepers if they could recommend names of individuals who they thought may be suitable for my study. After explaining my study's purpose and my participant criteria, all gatekeepers were able to suggest the names of individuals whom they thought would be information-rich cases. I then sent my

recruitment email (Appendix A) to the recommended individuals, asking if they were interested in participating. This recruitment message was sent in both English and French, as the preferred language of the recipients was not yet known. When someone expressed interest in being a participant in my study, I then sent them a follow-up email including the Consent Form (Appendix B), in either English or French when their preferred language was known, or in both languages when their preferred language was not yet known. The Consent Form outlined the purpose of the study, addressed the types of questions that would be asked during the interview, explained confidentiality, and disclosed potential risks and benefits involved for participants. The form clearly stated that the interviews would be audio-recorded for the purpose of verbal accuracy, and that participants would be able to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer questions without consequence (Patton, 2002). All participants signed and returned the Consent Form via email. The follow-up email message also included a hyperlink to the online questionnaire, inviting participants to complete it prior to the interview. I asked participants to suggest a date and time that would be convenient for them to do the interview.

Furthermore, I invited participants to suggest the names of other individuals who they thought may be interested in participating in the study. Together with the names suggested from my initial gatekeepers, this snowball technique resulted in 63 names of potential participants, many of which were suggested multiple times by different people. Of the 63 names provided, I invited 45 to participate in my study. I was strategic with respect to the order in which I invited participants so as to intentionally recruit participants from as many different regions of the country as possible. Of the 45 who were invited to

participate, 25 agreed. The 18 individuals who I did not contact were either working at universities or colleges in Ontario, a region from which I already had sufficient representation in my sample, or were individuals I knew personally and thus decided to exclude due to ethical considerations. The pre-interview questionnaire responses revealed that one participant did not meet the years of experience criterion. Although having less than five years of experience in a SAS role, I decided to retain this participant in my study due to the difficulty I experienced in recruiting any other participants from her particular region of the country.

One of the issues related to participant selection that required caution was my own familiarity with the Canadian student affairs field of practitioners. As much as possible, I tried to avoid recruiting participants I knew personally. I succeeded in avoiding participants I knew well, however, as student affairs is a relatively small field in Canada, two of my participants were individuals I had met on previous occasions prior to beginning the study. A further four participants shared a mutual connection with me, and thus we had knowledge of one another but had not previously spoken or met.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study included both the in-depth interviews as well as the pre-interview questionnaires. This section explains the details related to both.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Before each scheduled interview, I asked each participant to complete a brief online questionnaire to collect his or her basic personal and professional background information. Participants were sent a link to the questionnaire, which was available in both English

(Appendix D) and French (Appendix E). I used Qualtrics software to build and administer this instrument online. I was intentional about designing the questionnaire to be compliant with online accessibility standards such that participants who use assistive technology, such as a screen reader, would not experience undue difficulty. For example, all questions were either multiple choice or text entry, and all questions were numbered. Furthermore, images were avoided, opting for the words 'Next' and 'Previous' instead of the default arrows to indicate the buttons to advance to the next question or go back to a previous page. I validated the survey using the Check Survey Accessibility feature available in Qualtrics.

Questions included years of employment experience in student affairs and services and in what capacities, identification of current job title and duties, academic qualifications either completed or in process, and questions about gender, race, and age. Collecting this information in advance helped me to prepare for each interview by getting a sense of whom I was interviewing. It also helped to condense the length of time of each interview and allowed me to focus on richer, more intensive questions during the actual interviews. Finally, filling out the questionnaire in advance may have helped to prompt the participants in thinking about their experiences and identities as SAS practitioners, thereby preparing them for more focused reflections during the interview. I included a textbox in the questionnaire in which participants could select their own pseudonym. If a pseudonym was not chosen, I selected one for them. The questionnaire also asked participants to confirm their preferred language for the interview, either English or French.

Interview Protocol

I scheduled an interview with each participant at a time convenient for them. Of the 25 participants, nine requested that their interview be conducted by telephone rather than Skype™ due to either not having a Skype™ account, not having Skype™ installed on their office computer, or, in the case of one participant, their vision impairment meant that a telephone interview was more accessible than Skype™. I happily accommodated all of these requests and proceeded with telephone interviews for these nine participants. A further two participants, who were located geographically close to me, requested in-person interviews rather than using Skype™. These requests were also accommodated, and for each of these two participants, I met with them in their office as requested to conduct in-person interviews.

At the start of each interview, I asked the participants whether or not they had any questions regarding the study and confirmed that they indeed had read the details presented in the consent form. I reviewed the main points outlined in the consent form prior to beginning the interview questions to ensure each participant understood their rights. A semi-structured interview approach was followed using an interview guide (Appendix F & G). Interview questions were open-ended in nature to give participants a chance to be flexible in their responses. In addition, I used probing questions to explore issues that arose to increase the richness and depth of responses. In this way, I was able to gather consistent information with which to compare cases, while still ensuring in-depth information on each particular case (Kvale, 1996). The open-ended questions addressed issues relating to professional identity, including many of the themes present in U.S.-based literature on

professional identity in SAS, such as socialization through education and training, engagement with professional associations, and professional mentoring relationships. Other questions asked about the various professional roles SAS personnel occupy and how one's institutional context may impact one's understanding of professional identity. The average duration of each interview was 74 minutes; the longest interview was 108 minutes and the shortest lasted 43 minutes.

All interviews were audio-recorded. The interviews conducted via Skype™ were recorded using the Pamela For Skype™ call recorder plugin. Although this recording application has the ability to record both audio and video, I made sure my participants understood that only the audio component of our interview was being recorded. The telephone interviews were recorded using the Call Recorder app installed on my smartphone. The interviews conducted in person were recorded using a handheld digital voice recorder. While interviewing, I maintained a stance of empathic neutrality, seeking to understand participants' views without judgment (Patton, 2002). In addition to recording the audio during each interview, I also observed and kept notes on participants' nonverbal communication, although this was not possible in the case of the telephone interviews. In addition, I was careful to note any key phrases and points made by respondents. Throughout the research process I kept a reflexive researcher journal. It served as a place to record my tasks and whereabouts as a researcher, and to record my thoughts and feelings about the study as it progressed. I engaged in journaling immediately following each interview. This journal writing allowed me to reflect on the interview and make notes about my feelings regarding the experience of the interview process (Patton,

2002). The detailed field notes together with my journaling enabled me to capture descriptions of the interviews, dates, amount of time spent preparing for each interview and the duration of the interviews themselves, as well as my interviewer comments. As part of my journaling, I reflected on my role, rapport, and biases, and outlined topics covered in each interview. I also carefully made notes on emerging themes, interpretations, participants' reactions, and nonverbal expressions essential to understanding the meanings of the participants' words (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In addition, I kept records of any conversations with participants outside the interview situation, such as any email correspondence or phone calls that occurred prior to and after the interview.

The above procedures also apply to the three French-language interviews, except for the following modifications. To those participants who indicated their preference for a French-language interview, I explained that I was not a French-speaker and thus the interview would be conducted with the assistance of my interpreter, Claire. All three French-speaking participants agreed to this arrangement. I was present with Claire during the French interviews, greeted the participants and introduced myself to them. However, it was Claire who reviewed the consent form with them, asked the questions, and took notes during the interview. There were several times when a participant asked for clarification about either the purpose of the research, or about a particular concept that arose, and Claire was able to translate their questions for me to answer, and subsequently translate my response and relay it to the participant. This sort of consecutive translation was very minimal, as Claire was largely able to direct the French interviews independently. Immediately following each of the French interviews, Claire and I debriefed about what

had been shared by the participant and the observations that Claire had noted about the participants' feelings and attitudes.

Data Analysis

The audio for each interview was exported from the recording application as an MP3 file. All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. In the case of the French-language interviews, my interpreter, Claire, transcribed the interviews in French and subsequently translated the transcriptions into English. Following Squires's (2009) recommendations for cross-language research, I then employed the services of a second professional translator to review the original French transcripts together with Claire's English translations. This second translator checked the translations for accuracy by identifying what she believed to be omissions, additions, or other mistranslations. Claire and I reviewed the recommendations and explanations received by the second translator, and minor changes were made to the translations in a handful of cases. It was these finalized English translations that I included in my data analysis. All interview transcriptions as well as my researcher journal entries and field notes were imported into ATLAS.ti, a sophisticated qualitative analysis computer application. This software allows the specification of relationships among codes and facilitates the illustration of these relationships for use in analysis (Weitzman, 2000). Weitzman describes further advantages of using computer software to support qualitative data analysis such as enabling memo writing and the linking of these memos to text and codes, and creating hyperlinks between different points in the text.

Before coding, I read each transcript from start to finish to check for accuracy and to refresh my memory about the discussion. I read each transcript several times to gain a sense of the whole. Then, I noted sections relevant to my research questions. Following Creswell's (2009) description of a systematic process for coding data, I analyzed and categorized specific statements into clusters of meaning that represented the experience of interest. Once the coding scheme was developed, all participants' interview transcripts, as well as the field notes from the interviews and journal entries in their entirety, were coded under this scheme.

ASSUMPTIONS

As with any research utilizing participant interviews, a foundational assumption of this study is that the participants respond based on their individual perceptions of reality. Merriam (1991) described the concept of multiple and individual realities as primarily subjective in nature and in need of interpretation. Generally, participants in any given study respond based on personal interpretations and experiences. Unique and individual, perceptions are based on beliefs and experiences rather than facts. Thus, the exploration of individual beliefs and experiences facilitates the understanding of perceptions.

A second assumption is that participants will respond to the interview questions truthfully. The possibility of dishonesty in participant responses always exists, but because the research questions are not particularly sensitive in nature, it was not expected that participants would be reluctant to disclose true personal experiences and perceptions. To further diminish the potential for lack of transparency by participants and truth in participant response, participants were assured privacy and confidentiality.

LIMITATIONS

One primary limitation of the study is the reliance on the memory of the participants, for example when asking about their professional identity development earlier in their careers. Some participants may have trouble recalling bits of information from the past. Another possibility is that they may mix things up or assign value to events or experiences, which may be greater or less than the "real" contribution. However, identity is a deeply personal experience, and those with the best understanding of that experience are the real-life members of my study population–SAS professionals at Canadian universities. My job as the researcher is to seek "to achieve the same deep level of knowledge and understanding as the members or participants" (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012, p. 101), and in-depth interviews offer the best chance at reaching this objective. If inconsistencies occur during the interview process, the flexibility of a qualitative interview will allow me to probe deeper for clarification and develop an understanding of the facts, thus avoiding inaccurate or erroneous data.

Interviewer bias is another potential limitation with interview-based qualitative research, as bias may often be introduced either by the subjectivity of the interviewer or the interview participant. Interviews are a limited source of data because participants can only report their perspectives and perceptions on what has happened. Those perspectives and perceptions are subject to distortion due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and a simple lack of awareness (Patton, 2002).

As an English-only speaker, I was limited by my inability to communicate directly with my French-speaking participants or to analyze their French interview transcripts. The

use of an interpreter to conduct the French interviews and to translate the French transcripts presented several limitations. The participants' experiences and thoughts were communicated in the source language (French) and had to be interpreted by the translator and transferred into the target language (English). Challenges in the interpretation and representation of meaning may be experienced in any qualitative research process, but are more complicated when cultural contexts differ and translation is required. Language differences generate additional challenges that might hinder the transfer of meaning and might result in loss of meaning and thus loss of the validity of the qualitative study. To mitigate against such threats, I have followed many of the methodological recommendations set out in the available body of literature relating to the use of interpreters and translators in qualitative research. In this chapter, I have systematically addressed the methodological issues arising from the use of an interpreter and detailed the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness of the data is maintained.

While the use of Skype™ to conduct interviews has a number of advantages as outlined previously, the reliance on technology also presents limitations. With any videoconferencing platform there can be issues with sound quality, microphones, webcam malfunctions, and probably most common, a lag in the live feed. Things like Internet connection speeds and the quality of one's computer are also factors, as poor connectivity can cause Skype™ calls to disconnect unexpectedly or experience pauses. As Seitz (2015) has pointed out, this can have a negative impact on establishing rapport and maintaining good interview flow. To mitigate this issue, I ensured a stable internet connection was available in advance of the scheduled interview time by placing a test call with my

participants. In addition, I made sure to have each participant's telephone number ready, in the event that technical difficulties arose during the Skype™ interview which might force us to continue the interview via telephone.

Some may suggest that a sample size of only 25 individuals is a limitation. However, as with any qualitative study, the goal is not to use the data to make generalizations about the broader populations, but rather to investigate, understand, and present the meanings of the study's participants' feelings, actions, and experiences. This study's sample size of 25 allowed enough differing perspectives and individual experiences to be shared such that data saturation was reached with respect to how participants conceptualize their professional identity as a SAS practitioner and identification of factors that contributed to the formation of their professional identity. Further, a sample size of 25 is in line with, and even greater than, the sample sizes used in previous qualitative studies investigating professional identity and related concepts in student affairs and services. Examples of such previous studies include: Reybold, Halx, and Jimenez's (2008) study of student affairs administrators' perceptions of professional ethics (N=12); Bureau's (2011) study of graduate students' socialization to student affairs' values (N=17); Laker's (2005) examination of the socialization process in student affairs and its effect on professionals' conceptions of male students (N=17); Robinson's (2011) study of values in student affairs (N=15); and Crim's (2002) study of factors that influence the development of professional identity in student affairs administrators (N=20). It is important to realize that samples for qualitative studies are generally much smaller than those used in quantitative studies. One reason for this is the point of diminishing return to a qualitative

sample, that is, as the study goes on more data does not necessarily lead to more information. This is because one occurrence of a piece of data, or a code, is all that is necessary to ensure that it becomes part of the analysis framework (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). Frequencies are rarely important in qualitative research, as one occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as many in understanding the process behind a topic. This is because qualitative research is concerned with meaning and not making generalized hypothesis statements (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

This study was intentionally designed to capture the experiences of student affairs and services professionals from as many different regions of the country as possible, and thus a geographically diverse sample was prioritized. In addition, I also set out to recruit both English and French-speaking participants in order to be attentive to the experiences of both the English and French context. Given the size of my sample, I was not also able to intentionally stratify my sample across racial, gender, sexual, and other social identity categories. A larger sample size, perhaps in a study employing a quantitative survey method, for example, would more easily enable the researcher to seek adequate representation from all such social identities while also ensuring geographic and language diversity. With only 25 participants, however, it would not have been practical to necessarily seek such diversity in all categories. It is important to be mindful of the fact that 21 of the 25 participants in this study identified as White, and therefore the analysis and findings of this research are less attentive to the experiences of racially minoritized student affairs and services professionals. The opportunity for future research that does

specifically and more fully address race, ethnicity, and other social identities is discussed in Chapter 8.

TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

Qualitative analysis is inherently subjective because the researcher is the instrument for analysis. The researcher makes all the judgments about coding, categorizing, decontextualizing, and recontextualizing the data. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies are not evaluated by validity and reliability; instead, they are judged based on their *trustworthiness*. Trustworthiness refers to the ability of a study to produce meaningful results (Creswell, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe four components to establish trustworthiness in a qualitative study: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. The subsequent paragraphs present a brief description of how each component was established in this study.

Credibility

Credibility corresponds to the quantitative concept of internal validity. For the positivist researcher, internal validity refers to ensuring the study measures what is actually intended. In qualitative research, credibility deals with the question, "How congruent are the findings with reality?" (Merriam, 2009, p. 213). Lincoln and Guba argue that credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness and is based on the assumption that there is no single reality but rather multiple realities, mentally constructed by ourselves. To ensure credibility "the naturalist must show that he or she has represented those multiple constructions adequately" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). In this study, credibility was ensured through data saturation, the use of peer debriefing,

member checking, tactics to ensure honesty of respondents, and the clarification of researcher positionality.

Saturation is defined as "the point when no new information or themes are observed in the data" (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006, p. 59), and thus a sense of closure is achieved because additional interviews, for example, yield only redundant information. Reaching data saturation strengthens the credibility of the findings because it signals that the phenomenon has been fully explored and represented. The point of saturation in this study was noted when the themes and constructs in the interview data were only repeated and no new themes or constructs emerged. Keeping detailed field notes and recording thoughts and observations of emerging themes during the interview process in my reflexive researcher journal helped to confirm when data saturation was reached. When I noted that no new themes had emerged from the 24th and 25th interview, I decided not to pursue any further interviews.

Peer debriefing is recommended as an effective way of making the research process more transparent by sharing and discussing research decisions with an "impartial colleague" (Arber, 2006) or "disinterested peer" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308), who critically examines this information at various stages and provides feedback to the researcher. For this study, I discussed my collection of data and analysis of data with a colleague who had conducted her own qualitative dissertation, obtained her doctorate in sociology, and has since published several papers based on qualitative studies. I consulted with her throughout the information gathering and analysis phases of this research. We collaborated on my findings to determine if the analyses and categorizations made sense.

For example, one message that I received from her was regarding the emerging categories, and she suggested that I collapse two categories that overlapped. As another example, based on the categories, their definitions, and the overriding themes I had identified, my peer debriefer noticed the linking of theory to practice as a component of the participants' professional identity and suggested I incorporate this as a theme. I recorded all of her suggestions and comments in my researcher journal.

Member checking refers to the process of sharing transcriptions and preliminary analysis of the interview data with research participants in order to ensure proper representation of their voices and ideas (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Several weeks following each interview, after transcription was complete and during initial analysis, member checks took place. This process included emailing each participant a copy of their interview transcript marked with my initial analysis notes, asking them to verify the accuracy of the transcript, and to check that what I understood from their words was what they intended to convey. To avoid any unintended pitfalls in member checking, I followed many of Carlson's (2010) procedural recommendations including providing participants with precise member checking directions. These instructions included asking participants to focus on the meanings of the transcribed text rather than being preoccupied with correcting the grammar in their recorded responses. In the limited cases where the quality of the audio recording resulted in small portions of the transcription to be marked as [INAUDIBLE], usually only single words, participants were asked if they could recall the word or words they had used. Furthermore, reiterating the open invitation I expressed to each participant at the conclusion of our interview, participants were invited to offer any

additional comments or revisions to their previous responses. The majority of participants replied with no changes to the transcript and no discrepancies between the data analysis and their own understandings. Four participants replied with several clarifying comments in the margins to ensure specific remarks were interpreted correctly, and two participants offered entirely new additional comments in the form of typed paragraphs. In both cases, these additional comments were extra thoughts and ideas about their professional identity that built upon their initial statements. All information gained from the member checking process was included in the data analysis.

Employing tactics to help ensure the honesty of participants is another important aspect of credibility in qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). As previously explained, all individuals who were approached during the participant recruitment process were clearly informed that their participation was voluntary, that their identity would remain confidential, and that they could refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no penalties. I reminded all participants of their confidentiality and of their participant rights prior to beginning the interview and during the member checking process, so as to ensure that all participants were genuinely willing to take part throughout the research process and prepared to offer data freely. I also ensured all participants understood my independent status as the researcher, and that any names of people, departments, or institutions they may mention would be appropriately masked in all reports, and therefore they could feel confident in contributing ideas and describing their experiences without fear of any negative consequences. At the beginning of each interview, I encouraged participants to be frank and indicated that there are no right or

wrong answers to the questions that will be asked. There were several instances when I observed participants being hesitant with a response or questioning the appropriateness of their experiences, stating, for example, "This may not be the answer you are looking for." In each of these cases I intervened by reminding them that I am most interested in hearing about their individual experiences, whatever they may be.

The credibility of the researcher is especially important in qualitative research since the researcher is the major instrument of data collection and analysis (Patton, 2002), or as Lincoln and Guba (1985) put it, the "human-as-instrument" (p. 198). In order to make known my background, qualifications, and experience, I have included a discussion in this chapter outlining the personal and professional information about myself relevant to the phenomenon under study (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Transferability

Transferability is a term coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a way to discuss how results from one naturalistic study can be applied to different situations. In positivist work, the concern often lies in demonstrating generalizability—that the results of one study can be applied to a wider population. Since qualitative inquiry is grounded in thick description with multiple realities, and the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, generalizability is not the goal or an appropriate measure of external validity. In qualitative research, the concern of external validity is explained by the concept of transferability.

According to Lincoln and Guba, it is the responsibility of the qualitative investigator to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the phenomenon under

study, the research methods, sites, and participants is provided to enable readers to make their own determinations about how far they can be confident in transferring a study's findings to other situations. Therefore, I have provided sufficient thick description in order to help practitioners or other researchers in the future decide whether or not components of this study can be transferred to another inquiry in a different time and context.

Dependability

Dependability aids the study in meeting the criterion of consistency or, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) asked, "How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects (respondents) in the same (or similar) context?" (p. 290). In this qualitative study, dependability was demonstrated through the use of an audit trail. This audit trail included meticulously kept records of how I chose the participants, how the data were collected, how the data were analyzed, and how the coding and classification took place. The audit trail would allow an external auditor to understand the steps and processes in this study.

Confirmability

The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator's comparable concern to objectivity. Conventional objectivity in the positivist/post-positivist paradigm regards good data as that which reflects a single unchanging reality undisturbed by the researcher. In contrast, confirmability is defined as "the degree to which findings are determined by the respondents and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). In this research, I focused on thick description and the research audit to establish confirmability in the collection of

information and conclusions derived from the participants. Creswell and Miller (2000) explain that researchers can establish a documented audit trail "through journaling and memoing, keeping a research log of all activities, developing a data collection chronology, and recording data analysis procedures clearly" (p.128). The description of the data collection process, coupled with the reflexive journal, field notes, coding scheme and category definitions in ATLAS.ti are all preserved components of my audit trail.

Additionally, I was always mindful of my own positionality in relation to those of my respondents. Starks and Trinidad (2007) note that the researcher "must be honest and vigilant about her own perspective, pre-existing thoughts and beliefs, and developing hypotheses" (p. 1376). To mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process, I engaged in the self-reflective process known as bracketing (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Gearing, 2004), whereby the researcher recognizes and sets aside a priori knowledge and assumptions. This allows the researcher to attend to the participants' accounts with an open mind. Creswell and Miller (2000) note the importance of investigators acknowledging their beliefs and biases early in the research process to "allow readers to understand their positions, and then to bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the study proceeds" (p. 127). My reflexive researcher journal served as a method of bracketing, in which I recorded my personal reactions and decisions throughout the research process (Ahern, 1999).

THE RESEARCHER'S POSITIONALITY

As the primary research instrument, it is important for me to reflect on my experiences, recognize my own assumptions and subjectivism, and to understand how these

elements of me as researcher might impact the research process. While, as has already been discussed, I was intentionally cognizant of and reflected on my positionality throughout the research process, it is also important that I share elements of my positionality with you, the reader, such that you are equipped to make judgments about my credibility as the researcher and to be informed about what biases and preferences I bring to this study.

I am an English-speaking, white, straight male who was raised in a middle class family. My ancestors immigrated to Canada from Europe, and thus I identity as a Settler Canadian. I spent my childhood and received the majority of my K-12 education in the country of my birth, Canada, and later moved with my family to the United States while I was a high school student. I attended a large land-grant university in the United States for my undergraduate degree. I completed my undergraduate degree in geography and then remained in the same department to complete a master's degree. I moved back to Canada, enrolled in a bachelor's of education program, and became a certified secondary school teacher. I later completed a master's degree in education at a Canadian university, and then enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the University of Texas at Austin in Higher Education Leadership.

In terms of my professional career, I briefly worked in local government before transitioning to education, first as an elementary and then secondary school teacher in Canada. At the same time, my partner began working at a university in a student affairs role, and I discovered through her that higher education administration was a career option I wanted to pursue for myself. When an opportunity became available, I moved into a mid-

level student affairs position in residence life at a mid-sized Canadian university. I later took on an administrator role at a technical college in Texas, this time on the academic side of the house as opposed to student affairs. After several years in this position in Texas, I moved back to Canada and currently teach education courses at a Canadian university. It is relevant to note that my teaching responsibilities include graduate courses in a post-secondary education studies program.

I view the world through a social constructivist perspective. I believe that people co-construct their individual experiences through interactions. Consequently, each person's reality is different. This perspective influenced how I interpreted interview data and how I made sense of the information collected in this study. My philosophical orientation has influenced my methodological choices, including methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Texas at Austin. Three major ethical issues were essential: informed consent, right to privacy, and protection from harm. In order to protect my participants, I explained the purpose of the research, the procedures of data collection, analysis, and its use. I made sure all participants understood my explanations and before collecting any data, I received signed consent forms from each participant. Mertens (2005) explains maintaining confidentiality as methods to protect the identity of participants and in the handling of the data they provide. To protect confidentiality, I used pseudonyms when referring to participants, and omitted or changed the names of specific titles,

positions, and institutions that may be identifiable. As for the data, I kept all interview transcripts, notes, and other materials on a password protected computer that only I had access to in my residence or locked office. I also kept a list indicating actual participant names in a separate, secure place at my residence. Only I, as the researcher, was aware of the participants' actual names, with the exception of the three participants whose interviews were conducted in French with my interpreter. In these three cases, only my interpreter and I were aware of their actual identity. As per IRB guidelines, I intend to destroy all data at the conclusion of my research. To protect my participants from harm, I notified them if at any time they felt uncomfortable they could stop the interview, refrain from answering any questions, or withdraw from the study completely. I promised participants that their names or other information that could be linked directly back to them would not be identified in any reports or documents arising from this research project.

This dissertation was partly funded by a research grant from the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services. This award helped to cover some of the costs associated with data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5:

Professional Identity Context: Pathways, Misconceptions, and Marginalization

The goal of Chapters 5, 6, and 7 is to present data and analysis relevant to this study's research questions. The research questions are: (1) How do Canadian student affairs and services (SAS) practitioners make meaning of their professional identity? (2) How does their understanding of their professional identity impact their approach to their work? (3) What factors influence the development of professional identity among Canadian SAS practitioners? In this first analysis chapter, I present background and contextual information about the participants' pathways to the SAS profession as well as the misconceptions and marginalization they face related to their professional roles. These descriptions and observations shared by the participants offer significant insights related to the professional environment in which their professional identity is constructed. I present the data and analysis that is more specifically related to the first two research questions within the next chapter, Chapter 6, and the results related to the third research question are presented in Chapter 7. I have chosen to present the results of the in-depth interviews divided between three chapters to offer more manageable chunks of data for readers. In order to preserve my participants' voices, I present many verbatim quotations to illustrate the various themes in my data. In the participant quotations throughout these three chapters, information within square brackets has been added for clarification, ellipses indicate omitted portions, and italics indicate emphasis. To protect participant identities, I have made slight, inconsequential adjustments to some contextual details described by

participants, including names of people and institutions mentioned. In the case of those participants who conducted the interview in French with my interpreter, Claire, I have chosen to present their quotations in their original French form, followed immediately by the English translation, which I have italicized to set apart from the original. As explained in Chapter 4, all translation work was completed by Claire and reviewed by a second professional translator. Before presenting the results of the in-depth interviews, however, I first outline some of the basic demographic and employment characteristics of the participants.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Tables 2 and 3 provide a summary of participants' key demographic and employment information, respectively. Some information has been purposefully omitted from these tables or masked in order to reduce the possibility of deductive disclosure. Deductive disclosure, also known as internal confidentiality (Tolich, 2004), occurs when the traits of individuals as presented in a research report make participants identifiable to readers (Sieber, 1992). For example, if I were to name the institutions where the participants are employed, someone with knowledge of one or more of those institutions could likely identify individuals based on other traits such as gender, department in which they work, age, and years of experience. Such breaches in confidentiality via deductive disclosure are of particular concern in qualitative researchers since they often contain rich descriptions of participants and field sites. Qualitative researchers, therefore, "face a conflict between conveying detailed, accurate accounts of the social world and protecting the identities of the individuals who participated in their research" (Kaiser, 2009, p. 1632).

The threat of deductive disclosure was particularly high in this study, as student affairs is a relatively small field in Canada. This threat is heightened even more within those provinces and territories with very few post-secondary institutions. For example, both Yukon and Newfoundland and Labrador have just two post-secondary institutions, while Northwest Territories has just one. To mitigate against this threat, not only do I not reveal the name of each participant's institution, I have concealed the province or territory of some participants by adopting the five-category regional scheme outlined in Table 1.

Regional Category	Provinces and Territories
Pacific West	British Columbia, Yukon
Central	Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Northwest Territories
Ontario	Ontario
Québec	Québec
Atlantic	New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador

Table 1. Regional Categories

To further mask the participants' identities, their age and years of experience are presented using intervals rather than the precise number of years. Additionally, acknowledging the relatively little racial diversity among student affairs professionals in Canada, as has been previously inferred by Robinson (2011) and Mai (2009), I have not disclosed participants' racial identity, as doing so would very likely make it possible to deduce the identity of racial minority participants. Since there are no standard job titles for the various positions in the hierarchy of a student affairs and services organizational chart, I have assigned the following categories of employment level to the participants based on

their job titles and descriptions of their responsibilities: chief student affairs officer (CSAO), senior student affairs officer (SSAO), and mid-level. None of the participants were employed in a position that would be described as junior or entry-level. Functional areas within SAS are often referred to by varying names across institutions.

Name[2]	Age	Gender	Region	Language[3]
Amanda	30-39	Female	Pacific West	English
Barry	40-49	Male	Ontario	English
Beth	30-39	Female	Atlantic	English
Colette	50-59	Female	Québec	French
Dana	40-49	Female	Central	English
Fiona	40-49	Female	Ontario	English
Henri	40-49	Male	Québec	French
Jeanine	50-59	Female	Québec	French
Jennifer	40-49	Female	Atlantic	English
Jim	40-49	Male	Québec	English
Kara	30-39	Female	Ontario	English
Kevin	50-59	Male	Pacific West	English
Laura	50-59	Female	Ontario	English
Maureen	40-49	Female	Ontario	English
Megan	40-49	Female	Pacific	English
Nancy	30-39	Female	Pacific West	English
Nicole	40-49	Female	Central	English
Paul	30-39	Male	Atlantic	English
Peter	50-59	Male	Ontario	English
Renee	40-49	Female	Atlantic	English
Rita	50-59	Female	Central	English
Samantha	50-59	Female	Central	English
Sophie	40-49	Female	Central	English
Tim	40-49	Male	Atlantic	English
Tina	50-59	Female	Atlantic	English

Table 2. Participant Personal Demographics

[2] All names are pseudonyms
[3] Indicates the language used by respondents when participating in this research

Therefore to report the department or unit within SAS in which participants work, I have adopted the categories of functional areas provided by Fisher (2011, p. 9). Where a participant's main job responsibility is the management of a large portfolio and thus transcends multiple functional areas, as is often the case for CSAOs and many SSAOs, I have indicated this with the Management and Leadership label. The use of these categories of employment level and functional areas helps both to simplify matters and protect the identities of participants and their employing institutions.

Name	**Institution Type**	**Job Level**	**Functional Area**	**Years of Experience**
Amanda	University	Mid-level	Career development	10-14
Barry	University	SSAO	Management & leadership	10-14
Beth	University	SSAO	Management & leadership	15-19
Colette	University	CSAO	Management & leadership	20-24
Dana	Polytechnic Institute	CSAO	Management & leadership	15-19
Fiona	University	CSAO	Management & leadership	15-19
Henri	University	Mid-level	Employment services	< 10
Jeanine	University	SSAO	Management & leadership	25-29
Jennifer	University	Mid-level	Learning support & strategies	20-24
Jim	University	Mid-level	Orientation and first-year experience Student communications Leadership development	20-24

Table 3. Participant Employment Information, continued next page

Name	Institution Type	Job Level	Functional Area	Years of Experience
Kara	University	Mid-level	Student activities Student life	10-14
Kevin	College	CSAO	Management & leadership	10-14
Laura	University	CSAO	Management & leadership	25-29
Maureen	University	CSAO	Management & leadership	20-24
Megan	University	CSAO	Management & leadership	20-24
Nancy	College	Mid-level	Orientation & first-year experience	< 10
Nicole	University	SSAO	Accessibility for students with disabilities	15-19
Paul	University	Mid-level	Housing & residence life	< 10
Peter	University	CSAO	Management & leadership	30-34
Renee	University	Mid-level	International student services	10-14
Rita	College	SSAO	Management & leadership	15-20
Samantha	University	SSAO	Accessibility for students with disabilities	20-24
Sophie	College	Mid-level	Diversity & equity programs	10-14
Tim	University	CSAO	Management & leadership	20-24
Tina	College	Mid-level	Career development Counselling	20-24

Table 3. Participant Employment Information

Eighteen of the participants were female and seven were male. They ranged in age from 30 to 57 years old, with a mean of 45.6 (SD=7.9). With the exception of the territory of Nunavut, the 25 participants included at least one individual working in each Canadian

province and territory. Specifically, three of the participants worked at an institution in British Columbia, one in Alberta, one in Saskatchewan, two in Manitoba, six in Ontario, four in Québec, one in New Brunswick, two in Nova Scotia, one in Prince Edward Island, two in Newfoundland and Labrador, one in Northwest Territories, and one in the Yukon. Nineteen participants were employed at a university, five at a college, and one at a polytechnic institute. The participants' length of experience in full-time student affairs positions ranged from 2.5 years to 32 years, with a mean of 16.5 (SD=6.4). Nine were chief student affairs officers, with job titles such as Associate Vice-President or Dean of Students; six were senior student affairs officers, who were in director roles; and 10 were mid-level employees in positions classified as coordinator or counsellor, for example. In terms of the highest degrees earned, three had doctoral degrees, one of which was in higher education. Six had master's degrees in higher education or post-secondary studies, while seven others had master's degrees in other education sub-disciplines such as educational psychology and counselling education. A further six had master's degree in another field of study outside of education entirely. Three had a bachelor's degree only, but one was currently pursuing a master's degree in post-secondary studies at the time of interview. One had been accepted into an Ed.D. program, but had not yet started. For all but one participant, their degrees were completed in Canada – the lone exception completed both her M.A. and Ph.D. in the United States. Twenty-one participants identified their race as White or Caucasian, one as Inuit ancestry, one as Hispanic, one as Latina-Canadian, and one chose not to identify race. Although I did not directly ask participants to identity their first language, 22 of the participants communicated with me in English only, while three

elected to complete the French version of the questionnaire and conduct the interview in French. In all three of these French-language cases, the participants made it clear to me that French was their first language.

PATHWAYS TO THE PROFESSION

I asked each participant to describe their route to their current job. I included this line of questioning for two main reasons. First, as an initial question it allowed the interviewees to "warm up" and get into the interviewing mindset, helping to build rapport and momentum early in the interview. Second, acknowledging that prior research has highlighted the significance of early career experiences for professional identity development (Hirschy, Wilson, Liddell, Boyle, & Pasquesi, 2015), experiences such as graduate training or relationships with early mentors, for example, I hoped this question would help set the context for me as the interviewer, and lead interviewees to share details about their early professional goals and decisions. While the remainder of these analysis chapters will not necessarily present the interview data in the order of my interview guide, I have chosen to begin by describing the themes that emerged as the participants discussed their various pathways to the profession. I hope this will help to set the context for you as the reader of this dissertation and offer an introduction to my participants' stories.

While listening to the participants describe their professional journeys to a student affairs and services role, it quickly became apparent that two broad categories emerged: those with *direct* routes to the profession, and those with *indirect* routes. Those whose pathways to the profession were fairly direct were most often anchored in opportunities and experiences enjoyed during one's time as an undergraduate student. The journeys of

those participants who arrived to the profession indirectly had a more circuitous route, with considerable variation in terms of their career path. Those in this second category often found themselves in a SAS role serendipitously after beginning their career in another field, either inside or outside of higher education. I begin by exploring those pathways I describe as direct and then follow with a discussion of the more indirect and accidental manners of entry into student affairs and services. For almost all participants, there were identifiable points of realization when they first came to recognize that a professional career existed and was possible in SAS. The significance of these realization points are explored to conclude this section.

Hooked During Undergrad: The Direct Route

Several of the participants explained that they began to get interested in student affairs and services during their years as an undergraduate student. For those who identified an early interest in SAS, it was, without exception, their experience as an undergraduate student leader that enabled them to interact with SAS staff at their institution and thus gain exposure to the profession. Beth's pathway to student affairs and services was among the most direct of all participants.

> Kyle: I wonder if you could start just by telling me how you got into student affairs in the first place? What attracted you to the field and how did you get started in it?
>
> Beth: How did I get into the field? So, when I was an undergrad student at Eastern University, I was involved in the residence and I did orientation as a student leader. In terms of summer employment, I started working as a first-year advisor. So, during that time, I don't know if they still do, they had first-year advising

> offices. I did that role for two summers. Then, upon graduating, I became a recruiter for Eastern University.

Beth's direct journey into the profession included being involved on campus during her undergraduate years, working as a student worker in a SAS role, and then getting hired into a professional position at her alma matter immediately upon graduating. It is significant to note that Beth began a master's degree program only after first gaining some professional experience. As she recounts it:

> I really enjoyed the work, and the individual that I worked for told me about a master's of post-secondary at Atlantic University, and I thought that would be something I would be interested in. So, I applied to the master's at Atlantic University and got in.

For Beth, doing a master's degree program was not necessarily part of her initial career plan, rather she considered it only after her supervisor suggested it to her as an option. This parallels the story of other participants who had similarly direct routes into the field of SAS. Kara was an RA in residence during her undergraduate years, initially just as a job to help pay her bills, but it quickly became more than that for her. In explaining this part of her story, Kara shared "I just fell in love with the community, the mentorship and leadership that I got from my residence managers." Although she had planned to go to medical school after graduation, her new-found passion for her work in residence led her to pursue a residence manager position. She began this position immediately after graduation. Kara explained her next steps in this way:

> My director at the time was super supportive, and kind of at the year and a half mark gave me like, "Hey, you were a student here, you're a professional here, we

> love you dearly, you gotta leave here." You know, and I was devastated and I was like oh my god and- and she was like "I think this is gonna be the best thing that ever happened to you. You know, start thinking about what you'll leave for and how you'll leave, and if you want my job you need a Masters." And what can you do? And so I got my Masters in teaching and came to [this place] to do that. Had a wonderful time doing that and then ultimately got hired at this University.

Kara recounts that her supervisor urged her to gain more diverse professional experience and to obtain a master's degree. Now responsible for four units, Kara has quickly climbed the ladder to obtain a director position. She attributes her fast trajectory, in part, to this early frank advice she received from her first supervisor. Additionally, Kara credits much of her learning and early success to the wealth of experience she accumulated as an undergraduate student. Indeed, many of the participants described their undergraduate student leadership experience as the key to their early success in student affairs and services. Tim, now a chief student affairs officer with more than 20 years of service, recalled his experience as an undergraduate student when asked about his pathway to a SAS career:

> Kyle: Well, why don't you just start by telling me a little bit about your career path and how you wound up working in a student services role?
>
> Tim: Sure, well I mean, really it all started off, I'll go right back to the very beginning so tell me if I'm giving you too much information.
>
> Interviewer: No, no, that's great. Please go ahead.
>
> Tim: I mean I really started off as a volunteer for orientation, uh, back in 1990 as an undergrad. So I did that for a couple years, an orientation volunteer. And then I got hired to do orientation coordinator as a full time summer job. And then, they kept me on part-time over the fall and winter working on developing leadership

> manuals and program manuals for different leadership programs we were developing, so I started to getting involved with developing leadership programs. And coordinated orientation again the following year, and then got involved in and kept on doing more programming and engagement programming, and first-year experience programming.

Tim described that as an undergraduate student, he became involved with a variety of student leadership opportunities, part-time jobs during the academic terms, and full-time summer jobs, all of which connected to some aspect of student affairs and services. As Tim explained, one thing led to another and he was able to amass not only a variety of student affairs experience, but also an increasing network, making inroads with key staff and members of the administration at his institution. Then, upon graduation, due to his experience and contacts, Tim was able to secure a contract position, which resulted in him getting hired permanently. Tim explained his progression in this way:

> And then they realized that, you know, I really did enjoy, and I guess they thought I was good at it, uh the leadership, orientation, first year experience programming. Ah, so then, that became more what I focused on, and they were able to find more money for the number of years I was contracted, contracted two or three years and ah, eventually it turned into a fulltime job.

Like Kara and Beth and many other participants, Tim began graduate study and completed a master's degree only after first working fulltime for a period in a SAS capacity. Thus, for these participants, their preparation in advance of their first professional job came only from their undergraduate experience. One of the interviewees, Fiona, who is a chief student affairs officer at a university in Ontario, actually commented on this trend and offered an explanation. She explained:

> If you look at most entry level jobs in students affairs, although it is somewhat changing, they tend to rely more on undergraduate work experiences as well as involvement. And I think that one of the things with that, is when you look at the types of roles that undergraduates take on in Canadian colleges and universities, they are often extremely high level, in terms of the expectations, for example, resident assistants, association presidents, or a whole range of counselling jobs. The work that undergraduate students are doing is extremely valuable experience, and in a way, is professional preparation.

As described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, student governments, student associations, and other student groups tend to have a high level of responsibility on Canadian campuses and thus the student leaders gain significant real-world experience. Fiona is highlighting that this experience gained as an undergraduate student leader actually translates very well to professional SAS roles. Fiona added, "I look at the capability of incoming staff members based on what they've done as undergrads, and many of them perform at exceptionally high levels." Certainly, as is evident from the stories shared by the participants, graduate education is usually a necessity before advancing to more senior roles, but it is clearly not a requirement or an expectation for entry-level professional positions. At least for those who enter the profession via a direct route, the student leadership experiences one has during their undergraduate years are considered highly valuable and, as exemplified by Fiona's testimony, hiring managers in student affairs and services often see such experience as authentic job training.

As a final example, Maureen described her time as an undergraduate student leader as an opportunity that allowed her to learn about the work of student affairs professionals:

> When I was doing my undergrad I really kind of resonated with the student life department as a whole and how they seemed to connect with the people who were in it and the way that they approached their work. So, I'm thinking as an undergrad student, I was really intrigued by that and was on the student government myself and was involved in different ways so I could see them like how they interacted with the educational experience. [SHORT PAUSE] So that's what started me off. But I wouldn't have said at that time "oh I'm looking for a job in student affairs."

Due to her position on the student government, Maureen had frequent occasion to meet with professional staff in her institution's SAS departments, and participate in campus events alongside them. While she was certainly intrigued with student affairs at this time, she had no plan or intention yet of pursuing a SAS career. Instead, Maureen graduated, worked for one year in an unrelated field, and then completed a master's degree in an interdisciplinary studies program. Maureen found herself applying for a job in student affairs and services after completing this graduate program, at the suggestion of an acquaintance who questioned her about her career goals. Maureen described the way in which she responded to this questioning: "And out of my mouth came 'I want to work in student affairs.'" Later in the interview, she reflected further on her pathway to the profession:

> I think my path into it is a bit more direct then some people. You know like the team that I work with here, it's just student life departments tend to be this way in student affairs, it's very interdisciplinary. But from the start this profession just really resonated with me, and I think that speaks to the level of modelling and mentoring that the student affairs people during my undergraduate experience,

> that they gave me and that they took time to kind of show me what student life can be about. You know it was inspiring.

While Maureen's route to a career in SAS may not have been as direct as Beth's, Kara's, and Tim's pathways were, since she completed a graduate degree between her undergraduate degree completion and her first professional job in student affairs, it was still her undergraduate student experience of observing and working with student affairs staff on her campus that ultimately lured her to the profession quite early in her professional journey. It's important to note Maureen's observation that "student life departments tend to be… very interdisciplinary." Here, she is pointing out that although her career path was quite direct, many, and perhaps most individuals who work in SAS have arrived to the profession with more varied professional backgrounds. Indeed, similar comments were shared by several interviewees, and many of the participants' professional pathways can be categorized this way, as indirect. The following section offers descriptions of some of these indirect stories.

It Was Serendipitous: The Indirect Route

For the participants whose pathways to student affairs and services were what I am describing as indirect, a common theme that arose in their discussion of their entry into the profession was that of chance, or randomness as some described it. Many interviewees described a sequence of events that included an initial career in another field, often accompanied by graduate education or other specialized training, and then later just "falling into" a career in SAS. While Nicole's career path was more similar to those I described in the above discussion as direct, she, like Maureen, described what she saw as the more

common unintentional route, saying that "I think most people just fall into the profession. Maybe now people deliberately get into it but certainly when I started it was falling into it [LAUGHS]." Jeanine provided a testimony of her early career trajectory that exemplifies the unplanned or haphazard way that many enter student affairs and services.

> Claire: Qu'est-ce qui vous a menée à travailler dans le cadre des affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants. Qu'est-ce qui vous a attirée dans ce domaine?
>
> Jeanine: En fait, c'est le hasard.
>
> Claire: C'est le hasard?
>
> Jeanine: Oui, est-ce que vous voulez que j'explicite un peu plus?
>
> Claire: Eh bien, oui. Je ne sais pas moi, par exemple est-ce que vous avez eu quelqu'un qui vous a inspirée, est-ce que vous avez...?
>
> Jeanine: Moi, en fait c'est très simple. C'est que moi, ma formation c'est...je suis psychologue hein. Ma formation de base a été en psychologie des organisations. Alors moi, j'étais ce qu'on appelle une psy en développement organisationnel, une psy en développement organisationnel. Et, j'avais fait plusieurs mandats de ce côté et je souhaitais développer ma pratique plus clinique, en thérapie et j'étais allée me perfectionner de ce côté-là et j'avais appris qu'il était possible de faire un stage ici à l'internat du service aux étudiants comme psy professionnelle mais du côté clinique et d'être supervisée pour faire de la thérapie.
>
> Claire: D'accord, OK.
>
> Jeanine: C'est comme ça que je suis entrée dans les services aux étudiants.
>
> Claire: D'accord, OK
>
> Jeanine: Alors normalement, je devais faire un stage de 3 ans mais comme j'avais développé des connaissances en DO...
>
> Claire: Excusez-moi, en DO, C'est quoi DO?

Jeanine: Développement organisationnel,

Claire: Oui, d'accord,

Jeanine: comme j'avais développé ces connaissances-là antérieurement, le patron de l'époque m'a offert des mandats puis, finalement, je suis restée. C'est pas plus compliqué que ça.

Claire: Ça fait combien de temps que vous travaillez là?

Jeanine: Plus de 25 ans.

[English translation provided in italics below]

Claire: What led you to work in student affairs and students services? What brought you to that field?

Jeanine: In fact, it was by chance!

Claire: Chance?

Jeanine: Yes. Do you want me to expand a little?

Claire: Well, yes. I don't know, for instance did someone inspire you? Did you-?

Jeanine: Well, for me, it's very simple. My background is psychology, I am a psychologist. My basic background was the psychology of organizations. So, I was what is known as a psychologist in organizational development. I had had several mandates in that field and I wanted to develop my practice in a more clinical way, in therapy. So I decided to work on that and I learned that it was possible to do an internship here in student services as a professional psychologist but on the clinical side and to be supervised in order to get into therapy.

Claire: Okay.

Jeanine: And that is how I got in student services

Claire: Okay.

Jeanine: So, normally I should have had a three year internship but since I had knowledge in OD-

Claire: Forgive me. OD? What is OD?

Jeanine: Organizational development.

Claire: Yes, okay.

Jeanine: So, since I had acquired knowledge in that field previously, the person who was the boss at that time, offered me several mandates and finally, I stayed. That's all.

Claire: How long have you been working there?

Jeanine: More than 25 years.

Wishing to expand her professional knowledge and training as a psychologist, Jeanine only encountered student services as a setting in which to complete an internship to gain clinical experience in therapy. However, due to the specific knowledge and skills that she possessed, she became a valuable asset to the student services department in which she interned, leading her supervisor to offer her additional roles and responsibilities. Now, as a senior director with more than 25 years of experience, Jeanine looks back at the route she took in her career and describes it as chance, "En fait, c'est le hasard."

Several more of the interviewees shared their diverse avenues to the profession, which often appeared to have had little or no intentionality behind them. After working far from home for a few years in a community development role with a non-profit organization, Nancy had moved back home and was in search of employment. She ended up taking a position in SAS more as a matter of convenience than anything else. Nancy relates the story in this way:

> Then I moved home about four years ago and was working at a youth empowerment non-profit organization, and for about a year, and then got this job here as student engagement coordinator at the College, and I initially had taken the position, um, thinking I would only work here for a year, and was planning to go to grad school, but I've been here for a couple of years, cause ya know, life happens, and delays happen. So, for me, it wasn't [HESITANTLY] that I was particularly, just to be blunt, *passionate* about this kind of work. But that it was, um, like a pretty significant pay increase for me, having worked in the non-profit world, and was relating very much to my experience in community development, actually.

Nancy didn't set out looking for a job in SAS, but discovered that her skills and experience gained from community development work were applicable to this new opportunity. In addition to offering her employment stability and a pay increase compared to her previous job, her new role in student affairs and services also enabled her to be fulfilled professionally. It is interesting to note that when I initially asked Nancy about her pathway to SAS, she warned me that her story may not be the type of story I was interested in.

> Nancy: Mhm. Yeah, man. This probably won't be the answer you're hoping for [LAUGHING] Um.
>
> Kyle: There's no right or, there's no right or wrong. It's different for everybody, so I'm interested in hearing about your own experiences.
>
> Nancy: Okay, yeah, this might be a bit unconventional.

As the researcher, I was not hoping for any particular story, but rather seeking to learn about each of the participants' own experience from their perspective. The details of Nancy's story are certainly unique, as are the details of each of the participants' pathways to the profession, however I wouldn't describe her route as unconventional or atypical.

Nancy's indirect route to SAS actually shares much in common with many of the interviewees, including having pursued a career and gained work experience in another field, and then seemingly falling into a student affairs role at some point later due to happenstance.

Megan is the chief student affairs officer of a major comprehensive university in the Pacific West region of Canada, and didn't formally occupy a student affairs and services role until taking on this job. She explains:

> So I actually wasn't in student affairs until I became Dean of Students here so, um, so it's a little bit, well, everyone has different paths but I was on the academic side of the house, I guess you would say.

Megan was formerly a faculty member at her previous institution, although she had opportunities to be involved in varying capacities with student support initiatives. While Megan was at a much later point in her career than Nancy was when she entered student affairs and services, and the details of each of their respective transitions into a student affairs role are different, they share some of the same hallmarks. Megan explained her motives for entering student affairs and services in this way:

> Kyle: What was it about the job that made you decide to leave the faculty side of things and move into a student affairs or student services role? Were you intentionally looking for a change or looking for an avenue to move into student affairs?
>
> Megan: Mhm, um, actually for me, a lot of it was geography.
>
> Kyle: Oh, okay.
>
> Megan: I grew up just, uh, just north of here, and I wanted to come closer to my family, and so I had been watching for opportunities that were coming up in [this

> region]. I knew that the type of background I was building really did fit into student affairs work. And, um, as such I was a faculty member, I was an instructional faculty member so I don't hold a doctorate. And so I also knew that my opportunities within administrative leadership on the academic side were limited.

For both Nancy and Megan, a move back home was involved in their career change, and for both of them, finding themselves in a SAS position was partly just a result of circumstances.

Kevin also ended up in a student affairs and services role in an unplanned way. He stated:

> Um, I don't think this is uncommon in the Canadian context, uh, this was never a career goal or a career path that I was on. I started off teaching when I was quite young, I think I taught my first university course when I was twenty four.

Kevin explained that he went on to enjoy much success as a college faculty member, becoming chair of his department, and with his eyes set on the dean position. Kevin became involved in research related to human rights issues in higher education, and that led to opportunities to be involved with student conduct issues, threat assessment, and mental health issues. As a result of these experiences, Kevin received job offers to join a student affairs division—Kevin is now the chief student affairs officer at one of the largest public colleges in the Pacific West region. It is also significant to note that Kevin prefaced his discussion about his indirect career path by stating, "I don't think this is uncommon in the Canadian context," indicating he has previously noted that indirect career paths are common among SAS professionals, and perhaps particularly so in Canada.

The phenomenon of finding oneself in a student services role somewhat accidentally was also something that another participant recalled observing about the profession while she was an undergraduate student working in various roles as a student leader. Amanda describes taking note of a trend in the backgrounds of student affairs professionals in this way:

> in speaking with the staff, with the full time staff and, and student affairs professionals in the international centre at the university I was studying at, I learned that they all had extremely different paths um most of them had ended up in their roles very serendipitously to be honest, um, and um, you know very few of them had actually, ah, set out to be in that role intentionally or to even be in the field intentionally and I, I thought that was very interesting.

Ironically, the unintentional way that many SAS professionals arrive in the field and the resulting diversity of backgrounds among practitioners is what Amanda found intriguing and attractive, so much so that she decided to intentionally set about entering the profession.

The indirect pathways and the resultant diversity of backgrounds among student affairs and services practitioners was also recognized by Fiona, who described this trend as a strength of the profession. She stated:

> People come into the field from all sorts of different ways, again I think that diversity in terms of peoples' past experiences and educational backgrounds is something that is really valuable. I think if every single one of the people that I had working for me had an M.A. in higher education, then I wouldn't have the same, shall we say, subject matter expertise to draw on across the different units. Where I've got someone in accessibility services who has an enormously wonderful background in coaching, and is able to cross train other people, you

> know, and someone else who has a psychology background, and someone else who maybe has a really great background in sciences and math and who is able to provide really strong academic advising in those areas. These things bring intellectual diversity to the field.

While Fiona also recognizes the value of those who come to the profession more directly, she is thankful that many other practitioners in SAS bring with them experience and knowledge bases from varying fields. As she described, this allows the work of these professionals to be informed by multiple lenses and approaches, creating an intellectually diverse environment in which to perform the work of student affairs and services.

Points of Realization

In retelling their career path stories, many participants described a point in time when they initially recognized that a professional career existed and was possible in student affairs. For those who entered the profession directly, stemming from their undergraduate student leadership experience, this point usually occurred during their undergraduate years. For those participants who entered student affairs and services indirectly, this point of realization arose much later in their career, sometimes not until after a position in student affairs had been acquired.

As an undergraduate student, Tim was no stranger to the world of student affairs and services. As an engaged student leader, Tim was involved in many aspects of campus life. During this time however, he perceived these activities merely as fun and interesting part-time and summer jobs. For most of his undergraduate years, Tim planned on pursuing a career outside of higher education. With sincerity Tim stated, "I fully intended to be a teacher, I had been since grade 8." Tim's point of realization came during an encounter

with the dean of student affairs at his institution, shortly after Tim had received a student leadership award. As he put it, "I had one of those pivotal moments actually." Tim continued:

> Up until this point, Kyle, I always just thought, you know what a great fun summer job and part-time job. I never ever thought about it as a profession, you know? And, it was at that point in time, it was in June 1994, that the Dean of Student Affairs at the time looked at me and said "you know what Tim, have you ever thought of doing this as a career?" and I had to say up until that point in time Kyle, I'd never thought about it.

It was at this point that Tim began to seriously consider jobs in student affairs and services as a post-graduation option. Indeed, Tim went on to occupy various professional student affairs roles and progressively gain more responsibility. Although this "pivotal moment" was when Tim came to acknowledge SAS as a real employment option, it wasn't until after beginning his master's degree in post-secondary studies when he truly and more fully discovered student affairs as a profession. Tim described this discovery in this way:

> When I started my Masters, it really opened up to me, this was just not the right thing to do or the fun thing to do. Ah, it's actually, there's a whole lot of theory and professional practice guiding us in what we do. That really started to help me formulate, "okay, this is a profession, you know, this is a field." Um, and, so I really started to attach, and perceive myself that way.

Therefore, this later discovery of SAS as a "profession" was a second point of realization, or perhaps the second phase of Tim's realization of the field. With this full realization, it now became possible for Tim to begin to adopt a professional identity as a student affairs

and services professional. What exactly this identity means to Tim and the other participants is explored further in Chapter 6.

Samantha's route to student affairs and services was indirect, as she initially worked in various positions within government and the non-profit sector. Samantha's discovery of student affairs came as she was applying for a position in the field.

> I found myself, after I did my Ph.D., with an opportunity to be considered for a manager of the student resource centre at the University of Central Canada. Um, you know, really, I didn't know, I didn't know that there was any such field as a student affairs field. Really, I'd never heard of it before.

Although having never heard of student affairs and services before, her expertise in educational psychology made Samantha a good fit for the position she had applied for. She went on to explain how she came to understand the field:

> The person who hired me, she was the director of the student resource centre at the time, and she was a very active member in CACUSS, and very much involved in student affairs. Um, and one of her colleagues, who became one of my colleagues, did her graduate work, she's a Canadian but she went to the U.S. to do graduate training in student affairs, so she brought that knowledge and that background to, you know, professional development and workshops and that sort of thing. So they were really my introductions to the field. I didn't go to CACUSS the first year that I started, but the second year I went to CACUSS. That was my first CACUSS conference, and it was just like, wow!

It was during Samantha's first couple of years on the job when she came to be "introduced" to the field through professional development activities on her campus and then later at a CACUSS conference. It is noteworthy that Samantha explicitly mentioned that her colleague completed a graduate program in student affairs in the United States, and that

Samantha credits this colleague's knowledge and expertise as part of what contributed to her own introduction to the field. While only one of this study's participants completed a graduate program in the United States, other Canadian scholars and practitioners have indicated that going south of the border for specialized graduate training in student affairs is a common trend among Canadian SAS personnel, and has contributed to the professionalization of the Canadian field (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010b; Mai, 2009; Robinson, 2011).

As another example of a relatively late point of realization, Renee admitted to not knowing what the field of SAS was all about until after she had worked in the profession for at least two years. Renee had worked in career services for a couple of years and had just started a new position in the same unit.

> Kyle: Okay, was that the type of job you were looking for at that time?
>
> Renee: I wasn't even sure. I just needed a job. I was 26. I didn't want to go back to community– honest to God, I just was like I have an in, this university seems like a nice place to work, it's a full-time job, I have benefits. Just, at the time, it wasn't very great pay. It was low-scale, but I didn't care. I was like okay, let's just see where I can go. This is nice. I'm internal now. How could this evolve? Really loved the vibe of the campus, the options for growth, potential opportunities and future. I didn't realize that I would thoroughly enjoy working in student services. I didn't really know what it was.

Renee's description of her reasoning at the time, including "I wasn't even sure. I just needed a job" and "I didn't really know what it was" make it clear that she didn't recognize student affairs and services as a profession, and certainly not as an intentional career decision for herself. While Renee didn't describe any one particular point in time or event

that signaled her point of realization, she did discuss the significance of her master's degree, which she started four years into her tenure as a student affairs practitioner, in terms of how it changed the way she saw the profession. She remarked, "It was just so very eye-opening." As our discussion continued it became evident that while Renee "didn't really know what [student affairs and services] was" before her first position or even following two years of experience in the field, her understanding of the field expanded after her graduate degree and after becoming more engaged in regional and national professional associations. It was only after this fuller realization of the field when the development of a distinctive SAS professional identity was possible for Renee. This was true for the majority of the participants, and particularly apparent for those who entered the field indirectly.

Previous research in the context of the United States has examined career paths in student affairs (e.g., Brown, 1987; Crim, 2006; Richmond & Sherman, 1991; Taub & McEwan, 2006). Thirty years ago Brown submitted, "people enter student affairs careers by accident or by quirk, rather than by design" (p. 5), and Richmond and Sherman called student affairs a "hidden profession" (p. 8). These suggestions ring true for the experiences of the current study's participants who entered the field indirectly. More recently, Taub and McEwan found a majority (73%) of their survey respondents became aware of student affairs and services as a profession during their undergraduate years. In his qualitative study, Crim classified his participants according to their route of entry into the profession as either *typical*, those who discovered the profession early and completed a master's degree in college student personnel administration, or *atypical*, those who entered the

profession via a "non-traditional" work and/or degree path. While I too have classified my participants as one of two broad categories based on their entry into the profession, neither my methods nor observations would give credence to defining any particular pathway as typical, as both direct and indirect routes appear sufficiently common.

Misconceptions and Marginalization of the Field

Identity theory places emphasis on the meanings held by people concerning others, and even labels that are assigned to people, and the way in which meanings are created. An individual's identity is verified when the meanings of one's identity in a given situation match the defining set of meanings of a specific identity for a person, known as the identity standard (Burke, 1991; Stets, 2005). Furthermore, when a person's identity is verified, he or she is likely to experience positive emotions, such as satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem (Burke & Stets, 2009). As a result, a person engages in "reflective appraisal" of the responses of others to these self-presentations, and when the responses of others confirm the identity standard, behaviours continue along the same lines that led to their identity being verified. If a person's identity is not verified, he or she is likely to experience negative emotions that lead them to change his or her behaviour. During the interviews with the participants, a common theme that arose was that of the lack of awareness and misconceptions that people have about student affairs and services. A related emergent theme was the perception of not being recognized as central to the institutional mission, and thus feeling marginalized on their campus. In response to both the prevailing misconceptions about the profession and the experience of their roles being marginalized, interviewees described the frequent need to defend and argue for the legitimacy of their

roles and the profession at large. Such social experiences of having one's role and professional value consistently questioned certainly has implications for how one may think about their professional identity. Therefore, I present below a discussion of the participants' experiences of dealing with misconceptions about their roles and the professional marginalization they have faced.

Misconceptions and Lack of Awareness

Many participants spoke about their observations of the general lack of awareness in society about what SAS is, as well as the common misconceptions they have confronted about the nature of the profession. Maureen stated that some of the confusion about the profession is due to the ambiguity of the term "student affairs," saying:

> Well you see it's interesting because the word affairs conjures up, like people look at me and like [LAUGHING] "what, students are having affairs?" Like the word itself generates some confusion for people.

Another participant shared a similar sentiment, describing how her job title is sometimes joked about among family and friends:

> What's hilarious, but also cheesy and annoying, is often people will say to me, "Oh, you're a student engagement coordinator, do you set up students?" or, "How many students do you have engaged?" and like, like a wedding engagement. It's pretty annoying.

Clearly, having the name of one's profession or job title ridiculed or joked about does not lead to verification of one's professional identity. While the participant above described the experience as simply annoying, it's quite likely that the consequences extend beyond annoyance, presenting barriers to the deepening of and pride in one's professional identity.

When Laura was describing how she generally explains the nature of her job to other people, she commented on the limited awareness of student affairs among the general public:

> Generally speaking, I say I oversee the support and respond to whatever the student needs are in order to make them successful. Depending on whether people know what student affairs is, and usually they don't because no one has ever heard of it before in Canada, other than people in it.

While it is perhaps an exaggeration to say that "no one has ever heard of it," the frustration caused by people's limited understanding of the profession echoed across many of the participant interviews. Barry described a misconception about his job that he has had to correct:

> I think people don't understand student affairs, or if they do, it's different depending on the person, and some people have perceptions of what student affairs is. I remember somebody telling me once "you have all the fun stuff," I'm like, "Well, obviously, you haven't seen a day in the life of Barry, because it's not all fun." I'm constantly dealing with issues and problems that, basically, I'm shielding people from.

Barry continued:

> I think the only time I find myself describing what I do is when things happen in the news; when people say, "Can you believe this is happening at a university?" I'm like, "Yeah, I know, this is my world."

The misconception that student affairs professionals are always having fun calls to mind the popular image about student affairs that appears on many Internet sites, which includes the lines "What my family thinks I do," "What my friends think I do," and so on. The

image associated with the "friends" conception of the profession features a stereotypical college party. Barry's experience of debunking this myth is presumably not an uncommon one among student affairs professionals.

Unlike a traditional profession, such as medicine, or law, where people tend to understand quite a bit about what the nature of the field, the work of student affairs professionals remains largely unknown to the general public. Renee described the limited understanding of student affairs among members of her family:

> I've had family members who are, like, "So, you're working at the university? What are you doing at the university?" "I work in student affairs." And they're like, "So, what's that? Like, you help them out, like, if they get sad and stuff?" I'm like, "Uh, not really, but there is an office dedicated to that, but they do a lot more than that."

In this example shared by Renee, her family member did identify a role that some student affairs professionals play, but demonstrated a very limited understanding of this very broad field by assuming this narrow role must be Renee's job. Rita also discussed that in the absence of informed knowledge, people make erroneous assumptions about the profession:

> I think people have a, "Oh, student services, yeah we get it, we know what that is," but in reality they don't. [LAUGHS] They think of student services as being, "Yeah, that's where you go pay your fees and stuff like that," and it's not until you start talking about all the other stuff that we do, that looks after the education of the student beyond the classroom, that they say "Oh really? Really? Is that what they do?"

This lack of understanding about the profession that Rita and many other interviewees described has implications for how some choose to refer to their job in various contexts. For example, Nancy described the differing labels she uses to identify her role:

> I do describe myself as a student affairs professional when I'm at conferences, or any kind of events with other student affairs professionals. But when I'm here, I don't. I just say, in the community, I would just say I'm, like, a Northwestern College employee, and then within the College I just say I'm the student engagement coordinator.

It is unlikely that a professor or another member of the instructional staff at Nancy's institution would refer to their role as a "College employee," either in the community or elsewhere, but due to people's lack of awareness about what SAS is, Nancy avoids telling people what her actual job is, perhaps to evade people's erroneous assumptions about her role.

Amanda and Jennifer shared alternative ways they describe their job in order to help people understand their actual role:

> I often say that, you know, for folks who student affairs means nothing to, the other terminology I would use is student development, student engagement, that sort of thing. And now in this new role I can kind of speak more to the career development which sort of resonates with people outside of our field a little bit more. (Amanda)

> I refer to it like a guidance counsellor if somebody doesn't know. Similar to the guidance counsellor you get in high school, we're providing guidance and academic supports to university students. (Jennifer)

Amanda had recently transitioned into a new position in which she oversees her institution's career services department, and she has found that when describing her new job to people, the career development terminology is much more readily understood by people than when she used to explain her role using terms such as student development or engagement. Career development is a term used in a variety of contexts, including corporate contexts, and thus more people, even those outside of higher education, can make a connection to it. Jennifer uses an analogy, relating the work of student affairs at her institution to the work of a guidance counsellor at a high school. Since many people already have an appreciation of the function and value of a high school guidance counsellor, this strategy offers Jennifer an easy way to convey some basic, although limited, understanding of her role.

Several of the participants described the experience of people assuming they are professors or instructors at their institutions. Kara explained that even some members of her family think she teaches:

> So my family is blue collar, […], you know, those of us who have gone on to higher ed have very traditional jobs - accountant, doctor, engineer, period. And then I went through and they're like, "yeah Kara works at a university, she works at Metro University." And then I got my master's in teaching which actually qualified me to be a K to 12 teacher. So most of my family thinks that I'm a teacher at this university. So they, most of them think that I have a class and, you know, I have students, and off I go. So, I try to describe it to them as if I do have a class with students, those are our student leaders or users of our programs, but I'm just not in the traditional classroom. However, I'm teaching and learning with these programs that I have.

Especially due to the type of graduate degree Kara earned, a master's degree in teaching, some people in her family have mistakenly concluded that she teaches courses at her university. Kara has adopted the strategy of likening her work to that of a course instructor by explaining her role as an educator outside of the traditional classroom. Amanda explained that she has been able to use her credentials as a way to help people understand her role:

> What I often get is "so you're a teacher?" so the way that I [laughter] stress that to people is: I have a master's degree in education, but I don't have a B.Ed. so I don't teach in the classroom but I'm an educator and I have a master's degree in post-secondary administration. And that seems to make sense for people.

Kara and Amanda, who both assign high identity prominence to their roles as educators, both attempt to use the "so you're a teacher" assumption to lead people to an understanding of their role in student affairs as outside-the-classroom educators. Beth shared that even when she describes her philosophy of student affairs using her "pitch line," family and friends still often have trouble moving their conception of her role way from that of a teacher. Expressing some frustration, Beth explained:

> It's really hard to tell family and friends what student affairs is. So, normally what I say is student affairs helps to support students throughout their education to help make the most of their experiences both curricularly and co-curricular. So, that's kind of usually my pitch line. And then, usually, they'll ask "so, does that mean that you teach?" But, that's typically kind of how I describe it.

At least in one particular situation, Beth is most comfortable simply letting the person continue believing she is a teacher:

> I always run into this going through customs when I have conferences. Usually they'll just say "do you teach?" And I'll say "yes," because it's just the easiest way to describe it.

For Beth, getting into a lengthy discussion with a customs officer to explain her role and function as a student affairs professional is apparently not worth the hassle.

Marginalization of Student Affairs and Services

In addition to the lack of awareness and misconceptions participants described encountering in social contexts, particularly among their family and friends, many also shared their experiences of feeling undervalued and marginalized within their institution. This feeling of marginalization was raised most often with respect to their perception of how faculty members regard SAS professionals. Tina described feeling undervalued and unappreciated on her campus in this way:

> Sometimes people, they'll say to me, "what do you teach?" and I say, "No, I don't teach, I counsel," and then they don't want to talk to me. If you don't teach, you're not important, you know? You're not *really* a university or a college staff. So there is that tension. I think our academic, or my academic colleagues, they appreciate us when there's been a crisis, or there may be a crisis, or someone's crying, then they think of us and they're really glad we're there. But in general, I don't think, I *know* that we're not a priority for the institution.

Tina believes the marginalization she experiences on her campus is so much that some people on her campus, namely members of faculty, do not even want to talk to her and do not consider her to be a real college staff member. What Tina seems to be describing is the notion that instructional staff members consider her and other student affairs and services professionals as valuable only in reactionary situations when a crisis has occurred.

The proactive student programming and services provided by student affairs, however, are not, according to Tina, considered a priority. Thus, Tina feels her work is positioned on the sidelines with respect to what is considered the institution's core academic activities. Tina followed up on this point later in the interview, saying:

> I've always said that, you know, how can I put this, I am a counsellor in a place where people teach, so I call it the pimple on the polar bear's ass, to be honest with you. [LAUGHING] You know? We're not the polar bear. [LAUGHING]

Although a somewhat crude metaphor, this comparison illustrates Tina's feeling of being marginalized and unappreciated on her campus. Dana expressed a similar feeling of marginalization, explaining that members of faculty do not appreciate work that isn't in the academic core. Dana stated:

> I think that, in the university world, you have to work extra hard if you're not in the faculty core to earn credibility and to have your value appreciated. I sometimes liken it to doctors in a hospital. Professors in the university see themselves as the core, and they are. The core work of any post-secondary [institution] is the delivery of the education, in my view. But, I think in university academia in particular, the Ph.D. is so important to the faculty. That's what validates them, and if you don't have that Ph.D., and if you're not in the academic core, you're deemed to be of less value, I think. Some people might refer to that as academic snobbery, and, so, I think that's real. I do think that the non-academic support have to work harder to illustrate their value.

Dana suggests that credentials play a role in what she termed "academic snobbery," that is, the notion that the faculty members discount many student affairs professionals' worth due to their lack of a doctorate. Since most student affairs professionals do not have a doctoral degree, Dana feels they are considered less valuable and it is therefore often difficult to

earn appreciation for their work. While Dana used to work at a university, she now works at a polytechnic institute, and she explained the difference she has observed in this context:

> Here, in the polytechnic world, one of the things that I appreciate the most is that there's very little, if any, of that, because we don't have Ph.D.'s on staff. Our instructors, there's some brilliant people, but they're hired primarily for their hands-on skills. So, we are teaching nursing, we're teaching paramedics, we're teaching the trades, business too, it's huge. But, people are coming in because of their professional expertise, not because of their academic record, not because of their research publications, not because of their Ph.D. credentials. We have hardly any instructors with Ph.D.'s, and so you don't have that perception of inequality that you have in the university world, and I love that, it's refreshing.

Dana continued to explain that she has found it easier to collaborate and partner with faculty members on initiatives at her current institution as opposed to the university where she previously worked. She attributed this difference, in part, to the absence of "academic snobbery" on the part of the instructors at her current polytechnic institute. For some participants, the feeling of being unappreciated and marginalized at their institution was not exclusively attributed to the perceptions and behaviours of faculty members. Maureen described how other members of staff can also work to delegitimize her and her department's work:

> Where I have ran into some resistance is from other staff groups, actually. Um, so I remember working with a registrar who actually was very committed to the concept that all we were doing was babysitting students, we were hand-holding them and they should just learn to fend for themselves and we don't need your department at all, like you're creating wimps essentially.

Maureen did follow up to clarify that the current registrar at her institution, a small private university in Ontario, is a strong partner and advocate for Maureen's Student Life department, but she does occasionally encounter opposition such as what she described above. Henri spoke about the tensions that exist between the academic and student services personnel on his campus, but also pointed out that the undervaluing of student services extends to other areas of the institution:

> Il y a une grande séparation entre l'académique et les services aux étudiants. Donc, la connaissance mutuelle. C'est pas juste à mon niveau, même si c'est un peu plus accentué à mon niveau. Les services aux étudiants sont assez méconnus, […] il y a assez peu de valorisation, de reconnaissance […]. Il y a assez peu de valorisation de l'action communautaire et tout, et même des fois, il y a une dévalorisation parce que cette action communautaire là, elle est beaucoup incarnée par les associations étudiantes qui ont un rôle de défense […]. Ça a des impacts à tous niveaux. Ça a des impacts au niveau de la construction de nouveaux bâtiments où on va ne pas prévoir d'espaces pour de la collectivité. Le bâti coute tellement cher donc, on s'assure que l'académique a de l'espace mais le reste de la vie universitaire heu, il va falloir qu'elle se vive à l'extérieur là.
>
> *There is a huge gap between the academic and student services. So, we don't really know each other. It's not just at my level, but it is more evident at my level. Student services are rather unknown […], so student services are not really valued, recognized [...]. The concept of community support within the university is not highly valued at all and sometimes, it is even undervalued because people see it as mostly embodied by student unions that defend students' interests […]. And sometimes for instance, this impacts all levels. There are consequences at the level of the construction of new buildings, where there will not be any planning of spaces reserved for the needs of the collectivity. The cost of construction is so*

high that they make sure there is space for academic needs, but the rest of university life, it's going to have to take place outside.

As Henri explained, the marginalization of SAS is felt across his institution, and is noticeable in the planning of spaces and construction of buildings. A sense of frustration was observed in Henri's voice and body language when he spoke about feeling that his work is largely undervalued at this institution. This was true for many of my interviewees, indicating that this sense of professional marginalization is widespread in student affairs and services and has consequences for how one thinks about their professional identity.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has described the two broad pathways that participants followed to a career in student affairs and services. The direct route was characterized by an early introduction to the SAS field, often facilitated by the individual's experience as an undergraduate student leader. Participants who followed this pathway were typically hired into entry-level SAS positions soon after graduation, and then later completed graduate study part-time while employed. The indirect pathway to a career in SAS was described by several participants as involving serendipity or chance. Participants who entered the field indirectly often had not even heard of or considered SAS as a career option until they found themselves in their first student affairs position, and thus their point of realization with respect to SAS came later compared to those who entered the field directly. As several participants noted, the prevalence of those with indirect pathways to SAS creates a field of professionals with diverse backgrounds and varied skill sets.

The interview data presented and analyzed in this chapter also revealed the regularity with which SAS professionals are faced with misconceptions and a general lack of public awareness about their roles. Having one's professional role largely misunderstood by others may lead oneself to question the value of one's role, with negative consequences to one's conception of their professional identity. Participants also explained that student affairs and services practitioners on Canadian campuses face professional marginalization, characterized by members of faculty and other higher education professionals demonstrating a lack of value and respect for the work of SAS practitioners.

Chapter 6:

Participant Conceptions of their Professional Identity

In this chapter I present data and analysis relevant to answering this study's first two research questions: (1) How do Canadian student affairs and services practitioners make meaning of their professional identity? (2) How does their understanding of their professional identity impact their approach to their work?

An individual's professional identity is important because it is a key way that individuals assign meaning to themselves, and it shapes work attitudes and behaviour (Siebert & Siebert, 2005). In fact, one's professional identity can serve as an organizing framework for an individual's overall self-concept (Stryker, 1987). What this means is that the individual's professional identity is a focal point of their larger self-system. Through the construction of a professional identity, individuals are able to claim purpose and meaning for themselves, and explicate how they contribute to society.

During each interview, a significant portion of the discussion was focused on how participants conceive of their professional identity, how they define their role or roles on their campus, and how they make meaning of these roles. To be sure, interviewees shared a plethora of descriptions, characteristics, and ideas to explain and illustrate their conceptions of their professional identities. In this chapter, I have organized the participants' descriptions into the major themes identified through the data analysis process. I explain that the majority of the interviewees, when describing their primary professional identity, claimed a strong affiliation with the label "student affairs professional," while a few described having alterative primary professional identities (see

Name	Primary Professional Identity[4]	Other Professional Identities[4,5]
Amanda	student affairs professional	(educator*, leader*)
Barry	student affairs professional	(administrator, *leader, servant*)
Beth	student affairs professional	(adviser, counselor)
Colette	une professionnelle dans une fonction de gestion [a professional in a management role]	
Dana	student affairs professional	(*servant*)
Fiona	student affairs professional	(*administrator*, educator, *leader*)
Henri	un professionnel au sein des services aux étudiants [a professional working within student services]	
Jeanine	une psy [psychologist]	une directrice [director], une gestionnaire [manager]
Jennifer	student affairs professional	(counsellor)
Jim	student affairs professional	(educator, leader, *servant*)
Kara	student affairs professional	(educator, *leader, servant*)
Kevin	student affairs professional	(*administrator, educator, leader*)
Laura	student affairs professional	(administrator, educator, *leader*)
Maureen	student affairs professional	(*educator, leader, servant*)
Megan	student affairs professional	(*educator, leader, servant*)
Nancy	student affairs professional	(*educator*)
Nicole	student affairs professional	(advocate, educator)
Paul	student affairs professional	(adviser, c*ounsellor*, educator)
Peter	student affairs professional	(*administrator*, educator, leader)
Renee	student affairs professional	(educator)
Rita	student affairs professional	(educator)
Samantha	student affairs professional	(educator)
Sophie	student affairs professional	(educator)
Tim	student affairs professional	(educator, *servant*)
Tina	counsellor	educator, student development or student affairs professional

Table 4. Summary of Participants' Professional Identity Conceptions.

[4] Identity labels in italics are those I assigned based on participant descriptions. All other identity labels are listed using the participants' own words. Text in square brackets represents English translations.
[5] Multiple identities are listed alphabetically, separated by a comma. Identities subordinate to the participant's primary professional identity are enclosed in parentheses.

Table 4). I follow this discussion with an examination of the meanings participants attach to their overall professional identity and the various sub-identities participants articulated. I close this chapter by using the concepts of identity prominence and identity salience to explore how participants viewed and ranked their multiple sub-identities.

PRIMARY PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

As shown in Table 4, most participants identified their primary professional identity as "student affairs professional," while just a few participants (Colette, Henri, Jeanine, and Tina) claimed an alternative primary professional identity. These primary professional identity labels are discussed below.

I am a Student Affairs Professional

The majority of participants were very confident in describing themselves as student affairs professionals. For example, when I brought up the topic of professional identity, Amanda was quick to proclaim, "For me it's, it's 100% student affairs professional. Yup! I absolutely do. I think that for me that really resonates with me." Barry also expressed certainty with this classification saying, "I would definitely say that I do describe myself as a student affairs professional." As another example, Beth explained:

> I very much consider myself a student affairs professional. I mean, I've worked at student affairs pretty much my entire work career, and have been in higher education since 1999 except for one year. So, I mean, that's my whole life.

After Peter described his long professional history in the field and his identification to the student affairs professional label, he shared a similar sentiment to the one Beth conveyed, saying "I kind of call myself a student affairs lifer."

Alternative Primary Identities

Three participants did not claim a student affairs and services professional identity. Jeanine, who is the director of one of her institution's student services units, identifies primarily as a psychologist. As she explains in her own words:

> Jeanine: En fait quand on parle d'identité professionnelle, moi, fondamentalement, je suis une psy, C'est ça. Ça perce par tous mes pores de ma peau, et ça fait en sorte, que je pense que ça teint ma perception de la réalité.
>
> Claire: De la réalité de votre travail?
>
> Jeanine: Oui, et ma façon d'intervenir et d'accompagner à la fois mes étudiants, les collègues et les programmes et départements dans la mise en place de projets ou de démarches pour soutenir les étudiants. C'est vraiment ce billet-là qui m'accompagne.
>
> *Jeanine: Well, if one talks about professional identity, fundamentally, I am a psychologist. It oozes out of me. So that, I think it affects my perception of reality.*
>
> *Claire: The reality of your job?*
>
> *Jeanine: Yes, and my way of intervening and accompanying my students, colleagues, the programs and departments in the establishment of projects and approaches for supporting students. That's truly with me all the time.*

Throughout the interview, Jeanine consistently referred to her professional identity as a psychologist. Despite having worked in student services for more than 25 years, Jeanine did not seem to conceive of student services as a distinct profession nor consider it to be any part of her professional identity. This was true for each of the three Francophone participants, all of whom worked at French-language universities in Québec. Henri

explained his hesitancy to adopt a student affairs and services professional identity in this way:

> Je suis pas sûr que je dirais que je suis un professionnel des services aux étudiants. À la fois on est un trop en dehors de la mission première de l'université pour avoir cette impression là et de par mes fonctions, je ne suis pas amené à connaitre très très bien le côté académique, les côtés de faciliter les études et tout ça, donc, je suis un peu en marge de ça, donc c'est difficile pour moi de dire je suis un professionnel des services aux étudiants, c'est quelque chose qui est beaucoup trop englobant mais je suis un professionnel au sein des services aux étudiants.
>
> *I am not sure I would claim to be a student services professional. We are too removed from the main mission of the university to feel that way, and because of my role, I don't have the opportunity to get to know the academic side very well, to help them with their studies and all that. I feel a little outside of all that, so it is difficult for me to say that I am a student services professional, it is far too global, but I am a professional working within student services.*

While not comfortable with the identity of "student services professional," Henri does admit to being a "professional working within student services." While the difference between these two labels may not seem obvious, it became clear that Henri associated a much more holistic approach with the term "student services professional" than the way he and his colleagues operate within their institution. While Henri communicated some degree of aspiration to potentially embodying a student affairs professional identity in the future, he explained that the context in which he works limits his function to what would be better described as service-delivery. He referred to himself as a "professional who worked in student services," and as he described the nature of his work throughout the

interview it became evident that the role of administrator dominated his conception of his job. As I debriefed with my interpreter following Henri's interview, she noted this observation as well. When explaining his main role in student services, Henri summarized it this way:

> Je supervise 6, 7 étudiants, là, sur différents projets. Ces étudiants-là sont des employés à l'université et donnent la prestation de service directement aux étudiants. Et donc, moi je supervise leur travail, je définis un peu les règles d'administration des programmes sur lesquels ils travaillent.
>
> *I supervise 6 or 7 students working on different projects. These students are hired by the university and help other students directly. Personally, I supervise their work, I set the administrative rules of the projects on which they work.*

As was noted earlier, Jeanine identifies primarily as a psychologist, but as she explains, she also claims a second identity as a manager or director:

> Puis là vous parlez comme gestionnaire ou comme professionnelle, parce que pour moi c'est pas tout à fait la même chose. Par exemple, si je jouais mon rôle de psy ici, je ne ferais pas appel aux mêmes compétences que comme directrice. Voulez-vous que je parle comme directrice, le rôle que j'ai maintenant?
>
> *Are we talking about as a manager or as a professional, because, for me it's not the same thing. For instance, if I were acting as a psychologist here, I would not use the same competences as I do as a director. Do you want me to talk as a director, the role I have now?*

For Jeanine, this manager/director identity is not a part of her psychologist identity but rather is conceived as a separate identity altogether. She compartmentalizes these two professional identities and activates one or the other depending on the context.

Colette also avoided characterizing herself as a student affairs or student services professional. Like Henri, she saw herself as a professional, but stopped short of the "student affairs and services" label. Colette described her identity this way:

> Je me décris plus comme une...je vous dirais une professionnelle dans une fonction de gestion, hein. C'est bien important. Parce que pour les associations étudiantes, je suis, je fais partie de l'administration. Et pour l'administration de l'université, j'ai une proximité avec les associations étudiantes alors je suis dans un mode de gestionnaire.
>
> *I would describe myself more as a professional in a management role. Because, as far as the student associations are concerned, I am part of the administration. And for the university administration, I am close to the students' associations so I am in a management mode.*

It is significant to note that it was only the three participants working at Francophone institutions who did not identify at all as a student affairs or student services professional. Contextual reasons to explain this are discussed in the following chapter when exploring various factors that influence the development of professional identity.

One of the participants outside of Québec, while also identifying as a student affairs professional, explained that her primary professional identity is that of a counsellor. Tina stated, "I would identify myself, um, firstly as a post-secondary counsellor, I would say, and then secondly I would say I'm an educator." She continued, "And then I would say, yes, student development or student affairs, yep." As someone who entered the field indirectly, and worked first as a family and youth counsellor within communities, Tina maintains a primary affiliation with her counsellor role.

Unrealized Predictions

It is noteworthy that two of my participants, both working at Anglophone universities, suggested that many of their colleagues in SAS would not actually identity primarily as a student affairs professional. After Samantha confidently claimed the student affairs professional label for herself, she predicted that many others would not do the same:

> And yet I know that, you know, that is not as common as one would imagine with respect to how people, if you were to ask my colleagues, the hundred or hundred and fifty colleagues here at the University of Central Canada, I think very few of them would say, "I'm a student affairs professional" first. I think they would say, "I'm career services, recreation, athletics." People, I think, for the most part, you know, generally identify with the discipline specific role that they hold and less with the broader student affairs field.

Jim made a similar prediction concerning his student affairs colleagues at his institution:

> Anyways, that's the kind of thing where a student affairs professional in a very academic-orientated institution is, and whether they even acknowledge or have any sense of there is a professional body, there is professional literature. And, so, the identity piece is very difficult in a place where no one identifies as a profession. They'll identify as a service provider, or a counsellor, a psychologist, an academic advisor, a career advisor, they don't identify as student affairs. There are some exceptions.

In this study however, it was only the three individuals working at Francophone institutions in Québec who did not identify as a student affairs and services professional, declaring an alternative professional identity instead, and it was only Tina who ranked her more specific identity as a counsellor above her student affairs professional identity. While Samantha suggested "very few" and Jim stated "no one" in their respective institutions would identity

first as a student affairs professional, the vast majority of participants in this study did in fact claim this identity for themselves (see Table 4). It is possible that more people identify with the profession than either Samantha or Jim are aware of, or, given the interviewees in this study agreed to participate in research about professional identity in student affairs, self-selection bias as well as the snowballing technique may have resulted in the recruitment of a disproportionate number of participants who embody this overall professional identity classification. Being a qualitative investigation, I am less interested in numbers and proportions and more interested in the meanings participants ascribe to their professional identities.

IDENTITY MEANINGS

Various subthemes emerged from participants' descriptions of what their overall professional identity means to them. I present the following identity meanings below: holistic approach, outside the classroom, linking theory and practice, citizenship development, and professionalism of the field.

Holistic Approach

Supporting students was a common purpose identified by all participants in one way or another as central to their role as a student affairs professional. Participants spoke of providing support in terms of supporting student success, supporting student learning, supporting student wellbeing, and supporting student engagement, for example. Support for students was most often expressed in terms of a holistic approach to student learning and development. For example, Kevin described the overall goal of student affairs in this way, "We're really looking at enriching the overall holistic experience of the students, um

with the ultimate goal of student success." After Jennifer classified her overall professional identity as a student affairs professional, I followed up by asking her to explain further:

> Kyle: Okay, and what does that mean then to you, do you think? What is a student affairs practitioner, or student services professional, what does it mean to be that?
>
> Jennifer: Um, a support to students to help them navigate university life, to support the whole student. Um, so looking at the whole student, appreciating that while they are doing their studies, um, to be as successful as possible I think it's important that our universities and colleges, are supporting the whole student. And it makes for healthier campuses if we have healthier students and engaged students and provide programming and, you know, provide ways that students can get engaged on campus, then we have people that are involved while they're here and make great alumni. Then also, help them, develop those skills that are beyond the academics, to help them with those, emotional intelligence and those employability skills to help them move forward from here, to career life.

In this one explanation, Jennifer captured multiple components of what "supporting the whole student" entails, including academic support, promoting student health and wellness, student engagement, and emotional intelligence as an example of leadership and career development. A holistic approach to student development and services recognizes and values all aspects of a student's life including physical, intellectual, financial, spiritual, emotional, personal, and social. Rita focused on the emotional and psychological support that a holistic approach offers, stating:

> It's that holistic look at the student and what student needs are and how can we best support them to get those needs met. And in order for students to grow and survive and blossom they need to feel that they belong, they need to feel that they, you know, have a place, they need to, um, feel that they're valued. And I think

> that's a lot. I'm not saying that the academic side doesn't do that, but I'm just saying that that is a focus of what we do here at student services.

For Rita, and many of the other interviewees, supporting students holistically is one of the main hallmarks of SAS, and what differentiates the profession from instructional roles in academic units. While many SAS professionals may operate in specialized units or departments focused on specific forms of student support, as Kara explains below, it is the recognition and intentionality of the way they collectively serve students in a holistic way that forms a central part of the identity.

> So, we all kind of have our tagline, like, "hey, I work most prominently on experiential learning, community, personal development, professional development, mental well-being." But we all, then, are interconnected and talk to each other to create this kind of system of a holistic student support and student development area.

The idea of a holistic approach to student support and the broad way in which student affairs and services practitioners strive to meet students' varying needs led three of my interviewees to question terminology. Dana, whose job title is Associate Vice President of Student Services, had this to say:

> Dana: Incidentally, I think my title is a bit of a misnomer; it should say "student affairs" instead of "student services."
>
> Kyle: What's the difference?
>
> Dana: For me, there are a couple of issues. I think the student affairs literature says that student affairs is broader and it helps us to imagine the contributions of our teams that go beyond transactional support. It's not just a service that we deliver; it's about partnerships with the academic side of the house, all that other

> stuff. That newer thinking in student services, student affairs. The other thing I would say is there are lots of units in this organization, in post-secondary, that provide student services. Not just the student affairs people. Parking is a student service.

The example of parking helps to illustrate Dana's conception of a student service as purely a transaction with a client without an intentional educational or student development component. Whereas student affairs signifies a holistic approach with intentional student learning and development outcomes. Tim raised a similar point saying, "When I think about it, I prefer student affairs to student services because it's far more than just services. And, it does give us a bit more breadth." Interestingly, like Dana's, Tim's official job title uses the term student services. Jim, whose department falls under the "Student Services" banner at his institution, also brought up the discrepancy between the two terms:

> Jim: There's a difference between a student service and a student affairs work.
>
> Kyle: What is the difference?
>
> Jim: For me, there's a lot more program development pieces and there's more assessment and research that goes into program development because you're trying to address gaps at an institutional level, especially around different student populations, and you're not just doing a client-to-client service delivery. You're kind of stepping back and going "what are the needs? How are we addressing the needs? How do we find different partners on campus to kind of leverage our resources to kind of bring us to task on focusing on this particular need?" Whereas most of our services focus more in a silo fashion because they've never had to collaborate. "I'm a career placement service, why would I collaborate except for with my faculties like engineering and management to hold a career fair? Or help out with recruiting industry partners for placements?" That's their idea of collaboration.

Some of Jim's suggestions here are similar to Dana's—that a student affairs orientation is broader and holistic and goes beyond "service delivery" or "transactional" support. Both Dana and Jim also attributed a greater degree of collaboration and working in partnership with a student affairs approach as opposed to a student services operating style. The use of a multitude of terms in the field has been recognized by other Canadian student affairs and services scholars as a persistent challenge in this profession (e.g., Browne et al., 2015; Siefert, 2011). Seifert has suggested a possible distinction in the meanings of student affairs compared to student services, stating:

> There appears to be two sides to the coin. On one side of the coin is "student affairs" with an emphasis on student learning and development and on the other side is "student services" with an emphasis on providing services that support students to realize their educational goals. (Seifert, 2011, para. 5)

This suggestion by Seifert is similar to how Dana and Jim distinguished between the two, positioning student affairs as more holistic and geared toward student learning, while thinking about student services with a more limited service delivery perspective. Seifert cautions against drawing conclusions about a department's work based on their terminology, pointing out that in various contexts student services may be a part of the organization that falls under student affairs, or student learning may be a department that falls under student services. Thus, currently, regardless of how one may interpret the terms, there doesn't seem to be any standardization in their actual use across institutions.

As I explained in Chapter 1, I decided to use the composite term "student affairs and services" to describe the profession because I recognized the variability in terminology, and in communication with participants I was especially mindful of not favouring either

student affairs or student services as a more legitimate conception. As is evident in the preceding discussion about participants' primary professional identities, the majority of the participants in this study seemed to prefer the student affairs label, and this comes through in many of their verbatim quotations presented with these results. Even for those whose job titles include the term student services and who work under a student services institutional banner, such as Dana, Tim, and Jim, the term student affairs seems to be preferred when describing their identity and the profession at large, because, for them, it denotes a broader or more holistic approach to the work of supporting student success.

Outside the Classroom

Related to the idea of supporting students holistically is the notion of supporting students' development "outside of the classroom." While much of the participants' descriptions of this feature of what it means to them to be a student affairs professional overlaps with their descriptions of holistic support, I felt this concept was significant enough and repeated enough to analyze separately as its own construct. In Amanda's discussion of her professional identity she explained, "I'm in a profession or field that helps to support student learning outside of the classroom and really, it's about helping develop the whole person." Megan shared a similar sentiment, saying that she sometimes thinks about the profession as "having you know, sort of oversight of making sure that students get what they need outside of the classroom for their personal, social, emotional well-being." The use of the term "outside the classroom" to describe the nature of the SAS profession is used in contrast to what happens inside the classroom, which is typically thought of as the domain of faculty members. In his investigation of new student affairs

professionals' socialization into the field, Laker (2005) also noted the "outside the classroom" construct as a recurring theme in his participants' discussions of their work. Laker saw this as illustrative of student affairs professionals needing to legitimize their work by comparing it to the work of faculty members. In the current study, I did not interpret participants' use of the phrase "outside the classroom" to be part of an effort of legitimizing their work, rather I believe this characterization was directed more at simply delineating and defining the context of their work. Since many participants spoke about the lack of understanding and misconceptions in society about the field of student affairs, I got the impression that "outside the classroom" was a phrase often used to help them quickly explain the essence of their work.

In most cases, when interviewees referred to their work as supporting students outside the classroom, they also mentioned the role they play in student success inside the classroom. In the following quotation, Kevin begins to make this connection, if only cautiously:

> The work my team does supports students to be successful, with a focus of outside the classroom. There's certainly tentacles inside the classroom and we work with faculty, the academic end; but we're really looking at enriching the overall holistic experience of the students with the ultimate goal of student success, and that we keep our students right through to graduation. That we create opportunities for connectedness and to address challenges, whatever they are, often outside of the classroom, that impact the students' likelihood of success.

Although Kevin sees the focus of SAS as supporting students outside the classroom, he also acknowledges the role practitioners can play working with faculty to impact student

success inside the classroom. Amanda, Beth, Jim, and Kara also related the outside-the-classroom focus of their work with the impact they aim to have on classroom learning as well.

> I really do work on the non-academic side of things, in the majority sense, and that is to support students outside of the classroom and help them to draw linkages with what they're learning in the classroom with the experiences that they're gaining outside of the classroom. (Amanda)

> I would say we provide support systems outside the classroom that help support them inside the classroom, but trying to be a little bit more cognizant of the whole "learning happening everywhere" idea, and so, supporting student learning is really, I think, the key piece. (Beth)

> I try and explain our role, our function, how we're trying to engage students, and that there's learning inside and outside the classroom. Why do we have a physical built environment? Why wouldn't we just do everything online? There's a purpose behind bringing people to campus and engaging people and the learning that takes place outside the classroom, and how it blends with the inside. (Jim)

> I think student affairs is a field of educators who are connecting the outside-the-classroom experience to the classroom experience in the efforts of making, you know, supported environments during higher education. (Kara)

While many of the interviewees agree that their primary focus is outside the classroom, explanations such as "draw linkages with what they're learning in the classroom" (Amanda), "it blends with the inside" (Jim), and "connecting the outside-the-classroom experience to the classroom experience" (Kara) demonstrate that their commitment to

holistic student development also includes attentiveness to student success in the classroom as well.

Citizenship Development

The purpose and desire to contribute to students' citizenship development was a persistent subtheme in the participants' discussions of their professional identity. Kara described an overall purpose of her work as being focused on "the efforts of making, you know, supported environments during higher education that we graduate awesome citizens into the world. Like, that's my ultimate goal." Continuing, Kara explained this goal further:

> So that's my kind of, like, passion, drive, mission, is to get them to be as, to have as much practice as possible at being their best versions of themselves by the time they leave us, so that they're better able to unfold and keep growing in the world and in life.

Dana offered a similar sentiment to describe an overall feature of her professional identity:

> If I think about really, what am I doing every day at a high level? I think I'm supporting student success and I'm supporting a generation of people to be strong contributors to society. My identity is tied to that helping profession, I think.

Here, Dana is positioning this goal as being directed at benefitting society at large, whereas Kara's conception seemed to be more specifically focused on individual betterment and growth. Paul also mentioned citizenship development as an overarching goal of student affairs and services, and connected this aim to both individual and societal ends:

> So, yeah, it's all about producing, I think, good citizens to your country. And the student affairs side of the world, if you're engaged with a student, hopefully you're helping develop that student into a better graduate when they're done.

Henri described some pressure he and his student services colleagues were facing at their institution with respect to focusing their work more on academic and career-related activities as opposed to community focused activities that engage students as active citizens. Henri described how he and his colleagues try to defend their community activities, saying:

> J'ai beaucoup de mes collègues et moi-même, ou, on a une vision, on dit bien sûr ça, mais on a aussi à préparer des êtres humains, à aider des gens à se préparer de façon plus globale et il y aura un impact sur la mission d'études, il y aura un impact sur la mission de l'université mais on travaille beaucoup à développer des citoyens aussi. À supporter donc quelque chose d'un peu plus global.
>
> *I have many colleagues, myself included, who, we have a vision, we say of course we agree with all that but we should also prepare human beings, we should help people to prepare themselves for life in a more global way and that will have an impact on their studies as well as on the mission of the university. We try to develop citizens as well. We try to support something a bit more global.*

Evident here is Henri's contention that supporting students' citizenship development and fostering active citizens is actually in line with supporting the institutional mission, however, as he explained, not everyone in the administration agrees. Still, for Henri and his colleagues, their personal commitment to supporting the whole human being continues to drive their activities. Henri continued to describe the impetus behind his citizenship-minded work:

> Des gens un peu plus capables d'agir dans leur société et pas juste dans leur domaine d'études en particulier, de chercher à ouvrir des horizons un peu plus larges. Je pense au collègue qui travaille plus dans le secteur santé et qui travaille à équiper les gens à avoir de saines habitudes de vie et donc, bien sûr qu'ils le

> veulent pour la réussite universitaire mais leur travail, il est avec l'être humain, à aider à ce qu'ils aient une meilleure vie de façon générale. Donc, il y a un support à plusieurs niveaux, ou notre valorisation vient à la fois supporter cette mission première d'éducation, d'informations, mais aussi un support de l'être humain là de par nos fonctions et aussi par une mission plus personnelle qu'on va se donner.
>
> *People who will be able to be active in their society and not only in their fields of studies, we try to open their horizons. I am thinking of a colleague who is working in the health sector, more so, and he aims at giving people healthy life skills and of course this will help them in their studies but his aim is to work with human beings, to help them have a better life in general. So, there are supports at different levels. We value first the mission of the university, the education, the information, but we also support the human being by our very function, role, but also by a personal mission we give ourselves.*

Henri makes it quite clear that he and his colleagues feel justified in offering programs and services targeted at citizenship education as it not only aligns with the mission of the university, but is also part of their "very function" in student services. As a final example of this orientation toward creating "good citizens," Nicole relates this aim of student affairs and services to the "original mission" of higher education.

> I think what comes to mind though is making the world a better place. I mean ultimately that's what, in terms of post-secondary, you know if you think back to the original mission is you know, creating a well-rounded, you know, liberal education. Making sure you're well rounded, that you become, that you go on to become a good citizen in our, in your community, in your country, in the nation, internationally. So I think that is still a core thing and from that then, what does that look like? Well in terms of personal growth of and development, you know, where you yourself learn about yourself but also the world around you, so that you're not so, you know, in an echo chamber?

While her initial suggestion of "making the world a better place" is perhaps cliché and idealistic, Nicole's extended commentary, and Henri's too, calls to mind the democratic education ideas of John Dewey, specifically Dewey's emphasis on the meaning of democracy within an educational setting—that it is not merely the university's aspirational role to prepare students for civic responsibility after they graduate, but that through their educational experience students experiment with and practice democracy through their community-based educational experiences (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007).

Linking Theory and Practice

Another prominent feature of participants' conception of their identity as a student affairs professional was the notion of theoretically-informed or research-based practice. Jim explained how this component is connected to his professional identity:

> It's more, for me, how do we make the university experience for students to be an amazing learning and development opportunity. That's where I see the professional, theoretical, research, and practice coming together, and I can think in that kind of terms. That's how I identify as a student affairs professional.

Amanda offers a similar, if more extended, explanation of the centrality of research to her practice:

> It's not just a desire, but a commitment to knowing the literature and staying current and appreciating the fact that, like I wasn't just speaking fluff before when I said we really are here to support the academy. We are part of an academic institution and I think there is a necessity for us to inform our work and ensure that our practices are coming from evidence-based places, that they're informed by research, that they're informed by what's happening in the field both in the world of academia and then also as that relates specifically to the world of student

> affairs. So I think just a commitment to staying abreast of the current literature and appreciating the fact that you are a part of a post-secondary institution which comes along with certain, yes some baggage, but also some really great opportunity for innovation, strategic thinking, research-based practices, and that sort of thing. So I'd say that would be a big, a big one for me.

Both Jim's and Amanda's descriptions of linking theory and research to their practice is similar to how Strange (2010) distinguishes student affairs professionals. He says these professionals:

> (a) are able to reasonably explain the phenomenon they purport to address; (b) are aware of the validity of their explanations as supported in the research; (c) can use these explanations to guide their actions, through application of standards and models of practice; (d) can demonstrate the effectiveness of their applications; and (e) have a clear idea of the ends toward which their efforts are directed. (p. 30)

Beth spoke about how she uses theory and research when collaborating with faculty at her institution, which she sees as "the way to connect" with them. She also addressed many of the same points outlined by Strange above, as she explains it in her own words:

> The importance of learning outcomes, the importance of thinking about student learning, about being able to intentionally speak about student learning, and then the importance of assessment. I think that kind of theoretically informed practice is really the way to connect with faculty, and so, some of the programming that I've done is actually around working with faculty to kind of understand how and why we do the things that we do. So, what theory we use, why we use that theory, how we connect it to the academic mission of the institution.

Professionalism of the Field

For those participants who characterized themselves as having a clear professional identity as a SAS professional, many were quick to emphasize the field's status, as they saw it, as a "true profession." This was, in fact, the first point Tim made after I asked him to explain what his professional identity means to him:

> Kyle: Okay, and, so what does it mean then when you say you have this clear identity as a student services professional and how would you describe what that means to you? What does that entail?
>
> Tim: Well, I mean, for me, my focus as I see it is it's a profession. It's very well defined as far as what we do. Whether it is support students, or challenge students, or we're there to educate, to mentor, to guide students.

As Tim was explaining this to me, I got the feeling that he was well-practiced in defending SAS as an actual profession. As outlined in Chapter 3, student affairs and services has struggled throughout its existence to justify its legitimacy as a profession, and based on many of the participants' comments, they were very aware of this as an ongoing debate. Dana actually described her own progression in terms of thinking about student affairs and services as a profession:

> I will say upfront, I could take that question in different directions, but, more now than ever, I consider my work and the work of my colleagues to be situated in a true profession. When I started out in the late 90s, I was new to it all, but I would suggest that the landscape of Canadian student affairs was less mature than it is today. I'm not sure if I saw myself as sitting in a real profession, quite frankly. I had a real job, and I was decently compensated and satisfied, and there were lots of reasons to keep me doing it, but I'm not sure that I felt like I belonged to a respected profession.

Dana continued:

> The other thing that was happening was that the field was starting to mature. CACUSS, our national organization, is more professional than it's ever been, and I think people are quite proud to work in this field or this profession now. So, that's just an introductory comment to answer your question. I think that my identity as a professional is tied to this profession of student affairs.

As identity theory tells us, individuals often evaluate their worth and competence through the lens of their identities (Cooley, 1902), including their professional identities. Since the term "professional" is generally used positively to describe someone with advanced training and unique knowledge and skills that allows them to provide an important service to society (Wallace, 1995), it is seen as a desirable self-description. Thus, when an individual identifies with a professional role, there are psychological benefits. Valued role identities are linked to a sense of efficacy and esteem (Ervin & Stryker, 2001). As such, associating oneself with a respected profession can be an important source of well-being, esteem, and pride. As Dana has suggested, the field of student affairs and services has matured in Canada in recent years and this is leading practitioners to increasingly adopt a more distinct professional identity and enjoy a sense of pride as professionals. It is perhaps prudent to recall here that the three French-speaking participants in Québec, Colette, Jeanine, and Henri, did not identify as a student affairs professional, and in many ways, the ideas and opinions presented here about the professionalism of the field would not resonate with their experiences.

SUB-IDENTITIES

In addition to the principal professional identity of student affairs professional identified and explored above, many of the participants also described other identities related to their work. While dozens of different professional identities could be recognized, since each specific job title and each committee or working group one may sit on can be construed as an individual identity, I have chosen to explore the most prevalent of the multiple identities that emerged from the participants' accounts. These additional identities included: servant, leader, administrator, adviser, educator, and counsellor (see Table 4). In most cases, the multiple identities participants described were considered sub-identities, falling under the umbrella of their dominant identity of student affairs professional. Where the organization of one's multiple professional identities differ from this dominance structure, I note this in the analysis below. Following a description of these six multiple identities, I discuss identity salience and identity prominence with respect to how some of the participants rank their varying sub-identities.

Servant Identity

The servant identity is defined as viewing one's role as that of serving students. All participants spoke about their role in supporting students in one way or another, often describing their support as holistic and focused outside of the classroom, as we have already seen. The servant identity is one that transcended most interviewees. Kara communicated how important serving students is to her by stating, "We are as a field serving our students as our, as my number one, that's always my number one." Similarly, Dana expressed the importance of this aspect of her professional identity: "I do feel my

identity is defined by the helping element of my profession." Tim, too, revealed his servant identity when he described the purpose of his profession at its most fundamental level by explaining, "I usually try to keep it to that broad spectrum purposes as to why we're here: to support students, to assist students, to help with their development, their success."

Barry spoke about his work supporting and serving students in many different contexts, and explained how the profession may be able to better serve students by being more inclusive and attentive to those at the margins, or extremes, as he puts it:

> I think the understanding and commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is very important and sort of underestimated sometimes. I like to think of the way we deal with students on the extremes. If we can serve the students on our extremes, then we'd serve everyone in the middle, and I don't think we spend enough time on the extremes. "Extremes," people don't like that language, but, I think it gets the point across. We're talking about the two ends and everything else in the middle. We're already serving the middle. We can continue to do that. We need to also make sure we're getting everyone. I think that EDI kind of understanding gets you there.

This concern for better supporting and serving all students exemplifies Barry's servant identity.

Leader Identity

The leader identity refers to those participants who described conceiving of part of their professional identity as someone who provides leadership to either their team of staff or to their colleagues. This is not to be confused with simply occupying a position as a manager or director, rather the leader identity was characterized by those who saw themselves as inspiring a vision and motivating and inspiring others to engage with that

vision. Amanda described how she acted as a leader by being attentive to her team's needs. Amanda explained, "I enjoy the work of building a team and nurturing a team." She continued:

> There's a great opportunity in this role to be a strategic thinker and to be an ideator and to start thinking about career [services] on this campus in a very visionary sense. So it's managing people day to day, people's work, people's expectations, people's emotions to be honest. All the things that come along with managing people and making a great team and supporting a team, like in a real honest, good way. Because I think that that takes skill and attention and nurturing.

Rather than just going through the administrative motions of managing staff, such as assigning duties and approving leave requests and sick days, Amanda, and other participants who characterize the leader identity, understand leadership as an opportunity to stimulate and encourage creativity among others in an effort to meet a strategic goal. Kara's dedication to leadership came through throughout her interview, as she regularly referenced her role as one of leading her team of professionals toward a vision. She explained that she continues to work toward challenging her staff to be more learning-centered, focusing their approach and assessment on student learning outcomes:

> So that's kind of the game I've been in the last two years. Kind of convincing people things that I learned as a student leader, as an RA. Hey, it's not about numbers, it's about learning, right? These professionals are learning as a professional, sometimes with twenty years' experience. So it's been very, very interesting to kind of come in and really challenge people's self-concept and self-identity [LAUGHING] with regards to their work, um, and just try to get them on the, on the teaching and learning agenda. So, what can, what are students actually

> learning from coming through our areas? That's very different than just, "Did they have a good time?"

Kara admitted that, even as a leader who is committed to mentoring her staff and supporting professional learning, she sometimes falls short of ideal leadership. She described an instance of miscommunication between herself and a member of her team:

> I'm so deeply empathetic to one of my current professional staff members and, you know, I communicated something which they did not understand or make the same meaning of, and [PAUSE] it came to a head this week and I literally was like, I am not sure how we are not on the same page. Here's the steps that I took, those steps were not interpreted in the right way, you know, and I had to basically apologize for not being as clear as I could be, obviously not checking for understanding.

This incident illustrates Kara's leadership traits of empathy, understanding, and taking responsibility. Kara described further how she worked with this staff member to find and implement a solution to their mix-up, showing leadership in a challenging situation.

Administrator Identity

It was clear that all the participants carry out some administrative duties as part of their jobs. However, the idea of being an administrator was not the primary identity that most claimed for themselves. For example, the term "student affairs administrator" was never used by any of the participants during the interviews, whereas "student affairs professional" was the favoured terminology. Some participants did explain, however, that being an administrator is a component of being a student affairs professional. For example, admitting that student affairs professional is a vague term, Barry described being an administrator as part of what it means to work in student affairs:

> I would definitely say that I do describe myself as a student affairs professional. It's a very vague term that's not fully understood, I think, at the university. There's a piece around kind of being an administrator, so, somebody who really is the one who enforces the policies and also affects and changes the policies and the way we do things. It's sort of the problem-solving role that has anything to do with students, really.

Adviser Identity

This identity was observed in participants who described being a career adviser or academic adviser, for example, as central to their conception of their overall professional identity. For example, Beth was clear about her affinity with this identity:

> I will say that my background is advising and I'm very heavily involved with NACADA, which is the advising association, so, in many ways, I do identify probably a little bit more as an advising professional, which is part of student affairs, but that's been a lot of my focus, in that kind of advising-type roles.

As a point of clarity, Beth does consider her primary identity to be that of a student affairs professional. When she said she identifies "probably a little bit more as an advising professional" she was speaking in reference to the various units of student services that she oversees which, in addition to advising, includes health and wellness, career services, accommodations, and a few others. As the supervisor for these various areas, Beth undoubtedly wears many different hats in the course of her work, but it is the advising identity that is most prominent among her sub-identities.

Educator Identity

The educator identity is defined as conceiving of one's role, at least in part, as specifically targeted at student learning. Rather than simply seeing one's role as supporting

the education they receive in the classroom, the educator identity specifically entails understanding one's role as an educator. This identity was claimed by many of the participants as central to their overall student affairs professional identity. When the "outside the classroom" identity meaning was discussed earlier, we saw that Kara understood student affairs as a "field of educators". Rita, who would agree with Kara, explained it this way:

> Let me put it this way, I see us as educators in partnership with academics. I don't think, I think academics is a very important part of being a post-secondary environment but I think all the other stuff that students don't come in prepared for is the part what we actually educate and I think that that's the valid part of what we do. I think we advocate and I think that's a piece of it, but I think we also educate and I think what we educate in is the stuff that goes for day to day life as well as well as surviving in a post-secondary environment.

Rita seems to be suggesting that student affairs professionals share the responsibility for educating students with faculty, even if the focus of their educative practices differ. In Sophie's discussion of student affairs professionals as educators, she details some of the skills and competencies their work is targeting:

> I think that when, when we start to see ourselves more as educators, and less, and although we still can have a very strong role in supporting and providing services to our students, but when we see ourselves more as educators, we're teachers. So, in some way, in this case, for us, we're teaching about diversity, about inter-cultural competence, about cultural differences, about how to be successful in our inter-cultural communication, and how to be successful if you are immigrant, international student, how to be successful studying in the Canadian culture, all that kind of things.

For both Sophie and Rita, perhaps, their conceptions of their educator roles are focused on educating students in the affective domains such as critical thinking, leadership, and citizenship, however many other participants made the point that student affairs professionals are also major players in students' overall academic success, including their development of both cognitive and affective skills. Participants' descriptions of their educator identities are reflective of many of the ideas conveyed in ACPA's *Student Learning Project*. Contributors to this project write:

> Student affairs professionals are educators who share responsibility with faculty, academic administrators, other staff, and students themselves for creating the conditions under which students are likely to expend time and energy in educationally-purposeful activities. (ACPA, 2008, para. 7)

This conception of the role of student affairs strongly relates back to how the participants discussed their holistic approach and their efforts to connect outside-the-classroom experiences with students' classroom learning.

As a student affairs professional working in residence life, Paul regularly meets with students following incidents when rules or community standards were violated. He explained why his educator identity is vital in these situations:

> So, for me, like the way that I, when I meet with students, I try not to identify as an officer or disciplinarian, I usually say, "You know what, I'm here to teach you something." I'm an educator.

He continued:

> You know, my role here is, and I mean we intercept so many students that make mistakes. They come in here, they're upset because they think they're in trouble,

> and my first opening line usually is, "You're not in any trouble. We're here to have a conversation. I want to try to teach you something."

Paul did go on to explain that he does often have to impose sanctions in certain situations, and often finds these experiences difficult. His educator identity supersedes his identity as a disciplinarian, but when a situation requires co-activation of both, or when he must suppress his educator instincts to allow his role as disciplinarian to take over, Paul finds himself feeling conflicted. Keeping his educator identity dominant among his sub-identities is Paul's preferred identity structure, and thus he focuses his efforts as much as possible on student learning, treating minor rule violations as teachable moments.

Megan's identity as an educator took form during her previous role as an ESL teacher, and has carried over to inform her approach to student affairs and services. She stated:

> So I initially worked in, at universities as an ESL teacher and so, um, I think there is a sense of my identity that developed there around diversity and educating the whole student body.

Not only did Megan's previous experience teaching English as a second language lead to a well-defined educator identity, it also contributed to her commitment to principles of inclusivity and serving diverse students.

Counsellor Identity

The final major sub-identity apparent among my interviewees was a counsellor identity. Those with this professional identity engage as active listeners when helping students and are empathetic when working to assist them in finding solutions to their problems. Although Paul didn't use the term counsellor to describe this aspect of this

identity, his description of how he approaches his work makes it clear that he invokes a counselor identity when helping students. Paul explained the importance of listening and being empathetic in this way:

> Biggest thing I think for any student affairs professional, you know, a skill that everyone needs to have is the ability to listen to students. Because if you can't listen to the student, and really listen to what they're saying, you'll never be able to help them. And I find sometimes people are, every student has an issue, right, they come in and for them, you know, it's the biggest thing in the world, it is. And that might be our hundredth person that we've seen with this issue. But you've gotta hear them out. Because, if not, we're not going be able to support them because we end up being the people that are not listening, not helpful. We can't be dismissive to our students, even though for us, it's you know, the hundredth time someone's come in homesick, right? For them that's very real, it's a big deal. How do we help you every single time? It's being highly empathetic towards students. Because it's very real for them what they're dealing with. So, it's the listening piece for us. Obviously, I'm coming from more of a care perspective on this.

Paul' commitment to treating each student with respect and care is admirable, and his emphasis on listening and empathy demonstrate his counsellor orientation.

When interviewing Beth, it became very clear early in our conversation that she was proud of her background in counselling, having completed a master's degree in counselling. Beth mentioned her counselling background many times during the course of our conversation, and thus it was clear her professional identity was tied to counselling to some degree. As an example, Beth described some of her previous work in this way:

> Well, I definitely value my counselling background. My previous role at Northern Ontario University was coordinator of academic advising, and then I worked with them to create a student success center, and I was made the first director of that. I think having a counselling background in an advising position area was really important for the incorporation of career [services], we connect the student success center. Obviously, I had my background as counselling. And, I think as well as being a manager and director, having those types of skills I think is really important. So, I absolutely value that degree in counselling.

Additionally, Beth explained the importance of striving to "understanding each student's lived-experience by empathizing, even in difficult situations." In addition to Beth and Paul, several other participants referred to the importance of listening and empathy in their dealings with students, and thus the counsellor identity was frequently evident.

Identity Prominence and Salience

While many of the participants had multiple identities, many of which were sub-identities under their dominant identity of student affairs professional, it became apparent that in many cases, these sub-identities were not ranked by the individual with equal prominence nor were they equally salient in specific contexts. Depending on the individual and the context, some identities are more prominent or more salient than others. To be clear, identity prominence is the internalized importance of an identity to an individual, while identity salience is a behavioral indicator that represents an individual choosing to enact an identity (Stets & Serpe, 2013). While identity prominence and identity salience are often conflated in identity theory literature (Morris, 2013), it remains important to consider how contextual factors can combine or separate identity salience and prominence,

since Stryker and Serpe (1994) argue that interaction and awareness influence these processes independently.

As mentioned earlier in the discussion relating to alternative primary identities, Tina actually ranks her counsellor identity and educator identity higher in terms of identity prominence than her identity as a student affairs professional. For Tina, her counsellor identity ranks highest in prominence followed by her educator identity. Tina has a background in psychology, worked for several years as a community counsellor, and her first SAS job was also as a counsellor. These factors may explain why Tina ranks her counsellor identity so high on the identity prominence hierarchy. Kara exhibited both a counsellor and educator identity as part of her overall student affairs professional identity, and her educator identity had more prominence than her counsellor identity. Similarly, Rita ranks her educator identity highest in identity prominence amongst her multiple sub-identities. Rita explains:

> I think I see myself primarily as an educator. I secondarily see myself as an organizer and the third piece would be crisis management. That's how I see it. Yeah. And I don't think, I, it, sometimes one piece takes priority and the others fall behind. And other times, it's, I can't say that I would give any one more clear credence than the other. That's just the nature of this particular job. Um, in other areas where I've been in student services I always talked about myself as being an educator and it was for the holistic part of education of the students.

Rita's current position as a director overseeing multiple departments at her small college means that she is involved in numerous and various aspects of student programming and student services. While she ranks being an educator with the most prominence, she admits

that in differing situations, one or more of her other sub-identities may become more salient according to the context, while in other situations they may all have equal salience.

When Sophie described her thoughts and experiences of embodying an educator identity, it became clear that this sub-identity ranked high in terms of prominence (internalized meaning) but not salience (behaviour across contexts).

> I think, eh, it's something more internal for us. We usually, when we talk with faculty, we usually don't position ourselves as necessarily educators. Not yet at least. And I think, that this is part of how we see ourselves, but I think that, um, there has to be kind of, has to be cultural shift. It has to be part of the culture of this organization, and I don't think, again because the college learning outcomes is fairly recent and they haven't been rolled out widely yet.

Sophie explained that thinking about herself and her colleagues as educators was very important to her work, especially as they are aligning their work around defined learning outcomes with intentional assessment strategies. Despite this high prominence, however, she also admitted that when working with faculty "we usually don't position ourselves as necessarily educators." Thus, when working internally on a project in her own office, for example, her educator identity is invoked, but when collaborating with faculty she chooses not to enact this component of her student affairs professional identity. Further probing and discussion revealed that Sophie and her colleagues are cautious about positioning themselves as educators outside of their own department for fear of political or territorial disputes with faculty members who may think education is exclusively their domain. Sophie also explained that she hopes the culture of the organization will change such that she and her colleagues will be accepted as educators, and thus will feel able to activate

their educator identities across contexts. At that point, her educator identity would be both of high prominence and salience.

Laura's primary professional identity is very well-defined as a student affairs professional, but as she explained, she used to refer to herself as a therapist and also as an academic:

> I used to be more, I'd say, depending on context, therapist, because that's my training. Academic before that, and I thought I was going to be an academic the rest of my life. I have identified as an academic previously, but not anymore as my job has changed.

Laura's former identity as an academic was gradually replaced with the practitioner-oriented identities of therapist and student affairs professional as the nature of her job has evolved. Laura's choice of words, "I used to be more," related to her therapist identity indicates that in some situations her therapist identity may still become salient, perhaps in a situation involving a student's mental health.

For most participants, their overall professional identity as a student affairs professional was their dominant identity, characterized by a suite of identity meanings and inclusive of one or more sub-identities. Depending on the specific person and the context in which they were operating, the multiple sub-identities were ranked at varying levels of identity prominence and identity salience.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The majority of participants described themselves as student affairs professionals. Just three participants, all of whom were Francophone professionals in Québec, did not claim a student affairs and services professional identity. Interview data revealed that for

most participants, their overall professional identity as a student affairs professional was their dominant identity, characterized by a suite of identity meanings and inclusive of one or more sub-identities. Depending on the specific person and the context in which they were operating, the multiple sub-identities were ranked at varying levels of identity prominence and identity salience.

Chapter 7:

Factors in the Development of Professional Identity

This final results chapter presents data and analysis directed at answering this study's third research question: What factors influence the development of professional identity among Canadian SAS practitioners?

Professional identity is not a constant, but rather is in a state of flux, continually evolving and changing throughout the course of a career. Symbolic interactionists have explained that individuals learn to internalize social expectations through interaction (Blumer, 1969; McCall & Simmons, 1978). Thus, they learn to play roles, adapting the role to meet their own needs, as well as being socialized into the role demanded by others. Eventually, according to interactionists, the role becomes internalized and is integrated into the self. The following factors were identified as having a specific impact on participants' development of professional identity: mentors, professional associations; graduate education; supervisor support; gender, race, and ethnicity; geography; Francophone institutions; institution type; and organizational leaderships. Each of these various factors are discussed below. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how aspects of a Canadian identity may impact SAS professional identity in Canada.

MENTORS

Many of my interviewees shared that mentors played critical roles in their development as SAS professionals, including in the construction of their professional identities. Samantha attributed her concept of her professional identity, in part, to the mentoring she has received: "I do see myself as a student affairs professional. And I think,

I mean I know, that, um [PAUSE], I owe that to a large degree to the mentors that I've had." Participants described mentors as people who they talked to and stayed in touch with, and who could be relied upon to provide advice and guidance. For many of the participants who entered the field directly, mentoring relationships were formed during their time as an undergraduate student. For other participants, mentors were identified as supervisors or colleagues encountered after being hired in their first student affairs and services role. Several participants also identified mentoring relationships they developed with faculty during their graduate degree. Maureen explained the value of having had a mentor early in her career:

> When I was in my undergraduate years, um, the dean of students there was a mentor to me as a student and then as I made the transition into student affairs really coached me well into how to make the transition into the profession. So yeah, for me it was really, um, really meaningful to have someone do that at the beginning.

Barry also described how a mentoring relationship helped him develop as a professional early in his career:

> I had somebody who was like a mentor to me, especially early in my career. […] This was what she did. But, she was working in the student affairs unit and she was my boss when I first got that first job. One of the things she used to do for me that was really helpful, […], she used to just jump into my office, I was, like, 21-years-old, and I would sit there and she would put this scenario in front of me and she goes "what would you do?" And, of course, they were wildly complex situations and I didn't have the answer, and so I really struggled with that for a long time until she sort of told me "you're not gonna get it right, but let's talk

through it." I was even afraid to even just talk through it. So, I think that process was really good.

The mentoring Barry received at this time in his career was a form of professional training that provided him with opportunities to develop his problem-solving skills. Barry explained how valuable this early mentoring was for him in, as "problem-solving and issues management," as he put it, have always been critical aspects of his job. Colette spoke about an example of mentoring she received from her predecessor, who was always willing to offer advice:

> Par exemple, mon prédécesseur, celui qui était le premier directeur des Services à la Vie Étudiante avait comme, enfin, il disait toujours : « Le temps, c'est un outil de gestion en politique en affaires étudiantes ». Et effectivement, je me suis rendu compte, moi qui n'étais pas une personne patiente, je me suis rendu compte qu'effectivement le temps c'est un outil de gestion. Parce que le processus est souvent plus important que le résultat qu'on va avoir. Ici, je parle bien de ma boite là, […], parce qu'on a une culture, alors je considère qu'effectivement ça, c'était un conseil qui a été extrêmement judicieux et que, que j'ai retenu dans ma démarche d'acquisition de différentes habiletés.
>
> *For instance, my predecessor, the man who was the first director of Services to Student Life, he had, he used to say all the time: "Time is a management tool in politics with Students Affairs." And I realized, although I was by no means patient, I realized that he was right and that time is a management tool; because, the process is often more important than the results. Of course I am talking about my university here, […], because we have a certain culture, so I felt that his was a very judicious advice and I kept it as valuable in my search for different abilities.*

In addition to practical advice and skills development, participants also spoke about mentors who have helped shape their philosophical and theoretical understandings. Megan described the impact of one of her mentors in this way:

> So, my mentor is a woman named [] who was my advisor for my master's thesis […], the research that I worked on with her was really how students make transitions out of university and into the workplace. But more importantly, it was her commitment to access to education. She was the founder of [the Centre for Access to Education] and so that strong commitment to education as a means of social mobility and you know, changing opportunities in students' lives and the lives of their families and their communities and so, I'm very much shaped by her. Both in terms of that philosophical bent but also in the ways that she carried herself and worked with others on campus in ways that I didn't necessarily see in others.

This mentor has had a profound impact on Megan's approach to her work, and is someone Megan stays in contact with and who still offers her advice and guidance. As someone who entered the field indirectly, Samantha described how some of her mentors were instrumental in introducing her to fundamental aspects of student affairs and services:

> If I hadn't had an opportunity to have the mentors that I did, who introduced me to the field and said "hey, you know this service is part of, you know, a bigger picture," and introduced me to, you know, student development theory, et cetera, et cetera. You know, if I hadn't had that I wouldn't, there wouldn't have naturally been a place where I would have found that. And so, that I had these amazing women who were so passionate about CACUSS and student services, it sort of ignited my own passion. I said, "Ooh, wow, yeah, no, this," and then it just resonated.

While the influence of mentors was significant for all participants who mentioned their mentoring relationships, the critical role mentors played was accentuated in the case of participants who entered the field indirectly. Many of these participants did not have extensive student leadership experience as undergraduate students, and if they completed a graduate degree before entering the student affairs field, it was typically in a discipline outside of education. Thus, the mentoring these participants received after taking their first position in SAS was, in many cases, their main form of professional development at the time.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Involvement in professional associations was another main factor in the development of many participants' professional identity as a SAS professional. Interviewees spoke about how their involvement in associations, most notably the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, or CACUSS, offered them not only professional development in terms of knowledge and skills development, but even more importantly the opportunity to network and make lasting connections with like-minded professionals across the country. Many discussed that CACUSS offered them a professional home where they could be in community with others who reflect their same values and experiences. Amanda explained the significant role of CACUSS in constructing her own professional identity, particularly when she first entered the field:

> I would say like, while I don't feel as engaged with it as I used to be when I was first beginning in the field; a *huge* sense of my professional identity, or student affairs pro identity, came through the work of either contributing to or participating in CACUSS. For *sure*. So I haven't been [to the annual CACUSS

> conference] in the last, actually I went last year because it was local, but hadn't been for a few years prior to that. But when I first began I went every year for probably a good five or six years and I remember feeling, um, [PAUSE] having that sense of professional identity sort of solidified or affirmed. When you're actually in that kind of, you know, when you're experiencing that opportunity for networking and connections with colleagues across the country.

The significance Amanda attributes to the networking and connection-building is representative of how other participants spoke about their CACUSS involvement. In light of the marginalization many of the participants feel on their own campus, and the misconceptions about their profession they regularly contend with, it is perhaps not surprising that the opportunity to be among student affairs and services colleagues at a CACUSS conference, where one's professional identity is verified, has been such a substantial factor in their professional identity construction. When a person's identity is verified, he or she is likely to experience positive emotions, such as satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets, 2005). As a result of identity verification, a person is likely to continue his or her same behaviors that led to their identity being verified. Active involvement in CACUSS, therefore, may, for some, offer enough identity verification to counter the experiences that challenge their identity. Tim spoke about the challenge not having many opportunities in everyday life to network and be among other SAS professionals. He stated that "not necessarily in day-to-day life do you randomly run into them. So you don't necessarily just get into those conversations with people when you get to talk within the profession a lot." For this reason, Tim spoke passionately about the value of involvement in professional associations:

> These organizations are really important for, especially when you consider that we're a very finite group of people, we're not just, you just don't find student affairs specialists hanging around on the streets every day, […]. Having these professional organizations, like CACUSS, was so huge, and I mean really, CACUSS and the Atlantic Association of College and University Student Services were probably my first two exposure points to the profession. And those were fundamental for me because they just allowed me to actually get in a room of people who knew what I did, you know? When I said orientation, they knew exactly what- I wasn't talking about compasses, I was talking about orientation. When I talk about Indigenous student services, they knew exactly what I was talking about. When I talked about international student services, they got it, you know? So, for me, it was huge as far as being able to get together with people who really understood what I did. I didn't need to give them the *Reader's Digest* explanation. And we really delve in and talk about the challenges, the camaraderie, commiserate with each other in some cases, as to what we were going through, it was just tremendous. Also, from a clear practitioner-, so from the trade of being a practitioner and developing programs, just seeing how other institutions were doing this in Canada, and Atlantic Canada, was huge.

Like Amanda, Tim highlighted the importance of networking with colleagues across the country. For Tim, just being in the same room with people who understood his professional experience was a significant opportunity in and of itself. He went on to talk specifically about the value of building professional connections through both the national association, CACUSS, and Tim's regional association, AACUSS:

> You know, if something was really going poorly, you could call a colleague at another university, Atlantic Canada especially, AACUSS has this camaraderie that I just love, that you could call them, they will call you back right away, and you would have a long chat about something, and they would work through,

> they're there for you, they're in your corner, and so that professional camaraderie was just tremendous. And it allows you, from a professional identity perspective, allows you to really get your sense of, okay, this is what this looks like across the country, and how does it look, especially because education is not nationally done in Canada. What does it look like in Nova Scotia, versus what does it look like in New Brunswick, versus Québec, versus Saskatchewan, versus Alberta, and BC, and you know, as you go along, it's just so interesting to see how that changes, which was tremendous.

The notion of professional camaraderie was a persistent theme in the interviews with those who are or have been active in professional associations such as AACUSS and CACUSS. What appeared to have a lasting impact on one's professional identity as a student affairs and services professional was the experience of staying in touch with colleagues from across the country throughout the year, rather than having a limited interaction only at an annual conference. The notion of "we're all in this together" emerged in many participants' descriptions of the significance of these professional associations. While many also mentioned the professional development opportunities offered by associations such as CACUSS, including conference sessions, workshops, and webinars, it was the relational aspect of their involvement in associations that were described as particularly relevant in their professional identity development. Nicole shared this perspective and also explained the particular significance of communities of practice within CACUSS:

> I feel like the [CACUSS] conference was more the vehicle through which it gave you the opportunity to contact, to be in connection with colleagues across the country. That's probably what was more valuable but it was, it was attending the conference that allowed that to happen. And then to have those ongoing connections, […]. We used to have divisions and now we're communities of

> practice, so I'm involved with the student conduct community of practice. So having that is also part of that you know, identity as a student service professional and here's my very specific community of practice, COP, to do with student conduct.

Smaller and more issue-focused communities of practice within the larger CACUSS network provides professionals with even more opportunities for identity verification. In addition to one's overall professional identity as a SAS professional, communities of practice allow members, like Nicole, to affirm their professional sub-identities.

Paul, who works in residence life at a mid-sized university in Atlantic Canada, explained the benefit of having attending the annual conference of The Ontario Association of College and University Housing Officers, or OACUHO:

> A couple of years ago I did go to, um, I was a member of OACUHO, and went to that conference. Made lots of connections there. […] So it's great to be in a room of, with like you know, 300 res life people [LAUGHING], you know, and that was actually my first year as a professional and that was the first conference they sent me on.

Paul reflected on the fact that he often feels isolated at his university, where he is one of only a handful of residence life professionals, and not geographically proximate to similar professionals elsewhere. Therefore, attending the Ontario-based conference for housing professionals offered him a rare chance to build connections with his "people." As Paul explained:

> What a time. It was so good to, um, [PAUSE] cause you know when you're here by yourself you don't think of yourself as a big group of people, right? You know,

> you're here, you struggle, and whatever. And then to have gone there, and you're like, *Holy cow*! Right? You got 300 res lifers in a room. [LAUGHING]. […] You know, these are my peeps. I found my people [LAUGHING]. Right? […] I think that really helped [PAUSE], you know, I just finished up the winter semester and then that was really energizing for coming up for the Fall. And then to have, right off the bat, that network of people in Ontario, you know, and it's actually funny because I've never gone back [PAUSE] but there's probably two or three people that I've, um, kept in contact with ever since, that worked at smaller schools too. And we just had some stuff that was probably a little bit ahead of them and they really reached out, like, how do we do this? How do we do that? Um, what do you guys do? And we've been back and forth for years now. You know, sharing things back and forth. So, it's been good.

While budget restraints at his institution have not yet enabled Paul to travel back to the OACUHO conference for a second time, he has maintained contact with colleagues he met there, and they continue to draw on one another for support and the sharing of experiences. It became clear in our conversation that it has been important for Paul's professional identity development to have these professional connections, since communication with these colleagues, as distant as they are, helps to validate Paul's experiences and verify his professional identity as not only a student affairs practitioner, but as a "res lifer" too.

GRADUATE EDUCATION

Slightly more than half of the participants had completed graduate degrees in education, either in post-secondary/higher education studies, educational psychology, counselling education, or another education sub-discipline. Some of the interviewees with graduate degrees in a field outside of education mentioned the value of their degree in strengthening their professional identity, but not as a result of learning specific content.

For example, one participant explained that having an M.B.A. degree has helped to make her more "credible" in the eyes of the faculty and other administrators. This feeling of being validated has positively influenced her professional identity. Several of the participants with graduate degrees in education, but not all, spoke about their graduate education as a having had a positive impact on their professional identity, since, for many, even after working in the field for a few years, it wasn't until their graduate education when they were introduced to many of the theoretical underpinnings of student affairs and services. Tim explained how his master's degree program opened up his eyes to the broader picture of the field of student affairs and services:

> My master's was highly influential for me. Ah, when it came to, ah, really honing your skills and recognizing that this was a field, because I really didn't have that concept a whole lot at the beginning. I was really just somebody who loved working with students. Um, so for me, the master's was pivotal in allowing me to understand, that, you know, I had, that there was so much more I could learn, and so much more I could bring by learning it. That was really exciting for me. I mean, you know, there's, you always talk about these "ah-ha" moments or these epiphany moments.

Tim described that his master's degree enabled him to recognize that SAS was truly a professional field and worthy of academic study. Although his master's degree program had a general post-secondary education focus, rather than specifically geared toward student affairs and services, he learned enough of the theoretical background that applies to SAS to inspire him to take a more reflective and theory-informed approach to his work. Only one participant, Maureen, completed a graduate degree focused specifically on SAS,

and she went to the United States to complete it. Maureen described her motivation for obtaining this qualification:

> When I went into student affairs I was there for a year and I was like, you know what, I need education here to get me through this, [LAUGHING] because I am in over my head. So I went and got a degree while I was working in student affairs in the States, and continued working in a student affairs while I was doing that.

Maureen had already completed a master's degree in another discipline, and having entered the field indirectly, she found herself lacking some of the theoretical knowledge she soon learned was essential for her to be successful as a SAS professional. Therefore, she researched a variety of options for student affairs graduate programs, and found one in California with a strong reputation that met her needs. Maureen had been seeking out a graduate program with a distinct focus on the work of student affairs professionals, and didn't feel that there was a suitable option for her in Canada at the time, which, as Mai (2015) and McGrath (1998) have previously noted, is a common reason why many aspiring or current Canadian student affairs practitioners end up in American graduate programs. However, as previously mentioned, Maureen was the only one among this study's participants who made the choice to go south for a graduate degree. For everyone else in this study who enrolled in an M.Ed. program to further their professional knowledge, content related specifically to the work of SAS practitioners was, at best, the focus of one or two courses in their degree. Nicole mentioned the interesting dynamic she experienced of being a student affairs and services professional in her master's degree program:

> And then of course doing my master's degree which allows you to think thoughtfully about, um, within post-secondary education. I was actually the sole

> student affairs person [in my cohort] so unfortunately or fortunately, it was often "Oh you work with students, what do students think about this?" I was always having to provide that student perspective [LAUGHS] in my program, amongst people whose work was mostly around curriculum development and investment and program review, than necessarily working in the trenches, so to speak, with students and student issues. So that helped me really focus that as well, in terms of "who am I, what's my contribution to the university?"

Being singled out as a "student affairs person" among her fellow graduate student classmates actually helped Nicole to develop a distinct professional identity, as it forced her to ask herself, "who am I?"

Barry identified his graduate education as having an impact on his professional identity, because it changed the way he interacted with other administrators at his institution:

> I have my master's, I don't have a Ph.D., but that actually did change the way I was able to do the work and communicate what we do in a meaningful way around the university. When I just mentioned earlier of being able to talk to research and use data and kind of do academic speak, that makes a huge difference around here and previous universities where I've worked where I've been able to kind of communicate in the way that the senior administration communicates. So, that's made a huge difference. I think if I did my Ph.D. it would even further that.

With a graduate degree, Barry, as well as other participants, explained that they are able to feel more accepted among their colleague in academic units as well as senior administration. Also, as Barry explained, his master's degree equipped him with the tools

and skills to operate more effectively in his role, especially with respect to research, assessment, and communicating goals and outcomes.

SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

Participants spoke about the impact of having supportive supervisors on their development and identity as professionals. Some interviewees shared stories about their former or current supervisors who were particularly attentive to the needs of their staff, focused on personal and professional growth, or who consistently provided effective feedback. Kara described having had several supervisors throughout her career who have been able to recognize and harness Kara's strengths:

> Um, and the thing that they all have in common is that they are progressive. Certainly come from an anti-oppressive, social justice framework. They're able to see me for who I am, gifts and gaps! [LAUGHING]. And lovingly work on the gaps while amplifying my gifts. I think that all of them have done that, you know? So, hey, here's the things that you're so good at, how do we give you stuff that's amazing and you get to shine there.

Having her strengths appreciated by her supervisors has meant that Kara has often been given latitude to apply particular strengths when leading or working on projects, enacting components of her professional identity and having those identities validated with positive feedback. Jennifer explained that one of her former supervisors was someone who appreciated her strengths and also pushed her to develop areas of weakness:

> And then when I was working at Eastern University, I had a director who was very direct [LAUGHS] sometimes and saw potential with me and really appreciated my ability to connect with people and saw that I could use some

> professional development with policy making, with budgetary, uh, needs, with public speaking. So she was great, she really pushed professional development.

Being supported in this way by encouraging professional development was also mentioned as highly consequential in the construction of their overall professional identity by several other participants. For example, Kevin and Tina described the impact of their early supervisors' active encouragement of professional development activities:

> She provided me with opportunities to go to meetings with other student affairs professionals in the province and encouraged involvement in all of the other professional activities, and really um, brought new language to me around supporting students. […] That had a huge impact on me and really assisted in my evolution as a student affairs leader. (Kevin)

> He took being a student affairs professional very seriously. He made all of us sign up for AACUSS. You've probably heard of ACCUSS. And he *made* us go, and he made us take every single workshop, and offer workshops, and get on the executive committees or any committees. And so for the thirteen years that I was at Maritime University, I was very involved with ACCUSS. And it is a *wonderful* organization. I learned so much there. I had so much support throughout the Maritimes, or Atlantic Provinces. (Tina)

Having mentioned some difficulties with the vision and behaviours of the senior leadership on his campus, Paul explained that the support he received from this direct supervisor helps to maintain the feeling of being valued:

> I think the only thing that helps, um, is the fact that we have an extremely supportive director and he makes sure that any messages that come from higher than him get translated to us on the ground, um, so that I know that we're valued on some level.

Due to organizational restructuring on his campus, Paul described questioning his role and where he fit into the overall institutional context. If it hadn't been for the support of his supervisor, and the care with which this individual communicates complex intuitional decisions, Paul explained that his professional identity may not be as clear or as strong as it is currently.

According to Tull (2006), theoretical and empirical evidence has shown that some of the most common reasons new professionals leave the student affairs field include role ambiguity and the lack of perceived opportunities for goal attainment, professional development, and career advancement. As many of the participants explained, having supportive supervisors who value one's role and strengths, and who encourage and facilitate professional development, is an important factor in maintaining a well-defined professional identity.

GENDER, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

In terms of their conception of and development of their professional identities, issues of gender, race, and ethnicity were mentioned by a few participants. For example, when discussing her conception of her professional identity, Nicole brought up the role her gender identity may play:

> Nicole: I think too, I think, part of that too is being a woman in post-secondary as well. That's something too, that, um, just, yeah. In terms of your own, what that means.
>
> Kyle: What does that mean?
>
> Nicole: Well, it means, I think this is no different in any other area, but you know, having those lived experiences of not being taken as seriously as a male

> colleague. It's a good idea when a male colleague mentions it, but it's not a good idea when you mention it. So you can be in the same meeting, raise the same point, and people don't respond until someone else says it. Even though you just said it two minutes earlier. So it's those kind of experiences that, that isn't unique to post-secondary but that's just what that looks like when you're, yeah, in terms of just the gender dynamic that can play out.

Being dismissed and not being taken as seriously as her male colleagues is an illustrative example of the sexism Nicole experiences within her institution. Such "lived experiences" of oppression affect the lens through which Nicole views both her institution and the world, and necessarily influences her professional identity. Interpersonal interactions, such as the one featured in Nicole's example of sexism, are important to consider because they influence and connect identity and culture. As identity theory tells us, one's identity emerges through an ongoing dynamic process of interaction and interpretation (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934), and through such interpersonal interactions, people negotiate their identities (McCall & Simmons, 1978). Nicole's experience of having her ideas and recommendations dismissed at meetings is an example of a workplace interaction that conferred on her a status based on being a woman rather than a senior university administrator. By being tuned out and having one's professional competence treated as suspect, interactions such as this marginalize Nicole's and other women's professional identity. As Ridgeway (1997) has shown, by amplifying their gender identity, such marginalizing interactions bind professional women to the perceived lower status value associated with being a woman rather than granting them the higher professional status of being, for example, a senior university administrator or student affairs professional.

One of the participants in this study whose racial identity is of a minority group provided a clue as to how her racial or ethnic identity may influence her professional identity. This participant, who identifies as Latina Canadian, stated:

> I'm a woman in leadership and I've experienced some challenges as a woman of colour in leadership, I'm going to talk about that, I'm going to process that, I'm going to think about how I can create community around that, to the end of me being a better professional for our students. You know? And I think that that is always something that I will, that I will hold true.

What struck me particularly in this quote was that this participant maintains a student-centered perspective while discussing her own challenges as a woman of colour in leadership. She described that by reflecting on her experiences of discrimination, she strives to use these experiences and what she has learned from them to better support students. She described her passion for supporting holistic student learning and development in this way:

> And certainly, like, the personal learning that happens for students is my passion. And it's my passion because, I think that especially for some of the students that I work for at this university that come from equity-seeking groups, I myself have come from many equity-seeking groups and I just love that I can support that net during their time at this university.

This participant has a well-defined educator identity as part of her overall student affairs professional identity and emphasized the importance of citizenship development, particularly as it relates to helping students become transformational agents in their communities and society. She connects her own identity as a member of a marginalized or equity-seeking group to her work with students. Recognizing that the institution is an

oppressive force, she is especially passionate about and mindful of supporting marginalized students. She explained:

> I think what I see in my students and what I see in some of my staff is that exact thing, that I have to help them have a voice, and help them express their points of view to a dominant, sometimes a dominant narrative. Or, to a table that doesn't look like them or feel like them or have, like, the same life experiences.

This participant is committed to being an advocate for students to help them navigate their way through both the institution and world. This link between her racial/ethnic identity and her educator identity along with the desire to be an advocate aligns with Crim's (2006) findings who observed similar tendencies among the student affairs administrators in his study who were of African American or Hispanic background. Crim found that personal characteristics such as race and ethnicity affected his participants' professional development by influencing "the way they viewed both their roles and responsibilities within the context of their work environments" (p. 110). This rings true for the way this Latina Canadian participant's racial identity is integrated with her professional identity.

While the pre-interview survey did ask participants to identity their gender and race, I did not include a question about gender or race as part of the interview itself. It is possible that more participants would have offered thoughts relating to how their gender, racial, and ethnic identities may influence and intersect with their professional identities if I had asked them directly.

GEOGRAPHY

The geographic location of the college or university where one works was mentioned by several participants as impacting their professional identity. A participant

whose campus is located on the island of Newfoundland, for example, described how his campus location serves to isolate him and his student affairs colleagues:

> So I find here we're very isolated. You know, we do our own thing our own way. And sometimes, is it the right way? Is it not the right way? But it's because you're doing your own thing and you're not really around anybody.

This isolation limits the way this participant is able to interact with others in the profession, and raises self-doubt about his expertise as a student affairs professional. As a point of contrast, student affairs professionals across Ontario can easily and regularly meet for conferences and workshops within the province simply by driving down the highway. For those SAS professionals in Newfoundland, however, attending a student affairs conference or other professional development activity almost always involves a long flight and a costly price tag. As the comment from this Newfoundland participant suggests, this isolation can hinder professional development and networking, leading to a weaker connection with the overall professional field.

One participant who was working in Saskatchewan had formerly worked in Ontario, and she too had noticed a sense of isolation owing to her new geographic location. In reference to Saskatchewan, she remarked:

> […] it's a much less-developed post-secondary sphere. There are only three post-secondary institutions in the entire province. There are only a million people in the province. […] Ontario has, what, twenty universities, plus dozens of colleges and polytechnics. It's just a more well-oiled machine, and it's better networked, and I really appreciated the provincial associations I was part of in Ontario: the provincial registrars' association, the recruitment networks, and others where we're learning from each other all the time. This is a much more insulated place.

Although located in two very different regions of the country, the participant from Newfoundland and the participant from Saskatchewan shared a similar feeling of isolation from active student affairs and services networks. Canada's relatively low population density and the often great distances between population centers means that there are many locations across the country where student affairs professionals' connectedness can be threatened by geographic isolation. A participant in British Columbia shared how her geographic location has impacted the professional network with which she finds herself connecting:

> Being out west I actually now feel like I am connecting more often with other colleagues in the States, which in other roles at other universities, you know, in Ontario and in Nova Scotia where predominantly my work experience has been, I haven't had those direct connections as much or maybe I haven't had that self-motivation. Where here, I feel that just based on proximity I feel a connection now across the border that I didn't feel before.

In this case, working at a university in British Columbia close to the American border means this participant is geographically proximal to more student affairs professionals in the United States than in Canada. Therefore, she is experiencing more professional interactions with American practitioners than she previously did when working in Ontario or Nova Scotia. This suggests that the professional identity of a student affairs professional in southwestern British Columbia, for example, has the potential to be differently impacted by interactions with American colleagues than that of a someone in Ontario or Atlantic Canada, for example.

Another way geography impacts the work of student affairs professionals in Canada relates to some important differences in particular regions' student populations. One of the participants in northern Canada, for example, explained the diverse student population of her college:

> I would say a good, between 75 and 80 percent of our population is Indigenous, and it can be First Nations, and we service seven distinct First Nations communities. […] We also service the Inuit from central arctic and the Inuvialuit from the Beaufort Delta, so we have a large population.

She continued:

> And so our students' needs, not only are they the same as most inner-city needs, with poverty, and couch surfing, and, um, you know all of the things that go along with being in the city, but we also have the First Nations needs related to residential schools, and, um, a lot of psychological as well as physical needs of students. So not only do we look after them from an academic point of view, we also look out for them from, you know, the social perspective.

The large Indigenous population associated with the geographic region of this participant's college means that much of her work, and that of her campus's student affairs colleagues, must be attentive to the cultural and social realities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. As this participant alluded to, the legacy of the residential school system in Canada has resulted in a variety of mental health issues in Indigenous communities today, not to mention varying levels of mistrust in the education system and government, and therefore student affairs professionals working with Indigenous students must be prepared to meet their specialized needs. This participant described some of the ways in which she is conscious of many of her students' realities:

> It's a whole different philosophy of meeting the world. Um, from the Indigenous perspective it's a very oral tradition, for example. There's a lot of symbolism in the tradition. A lot of communication. Learning is by, um, it's almost like the old trade school style where you watch and then you do. So there has to be recognition that there is a difference for one thing and that here are the aspects of indigenizing education. Listening, being able to be supportive, understanding. And just, I think more than anything, being willing to look at things in a different way, which is really a hallmark of student services anyway, right?

While several other participants from varying regions also mentioned that indigenizing higher education has recently emerged as a trend in the profession, it was only the two participants from the North who identified supporting Indigenous students as a main function of their role as a student affairs professional. The other participant from the North commented:

> So I think the College plays a *vital* role for our community in the north and especially our First Nations community, and First Nations students coming from small rural communities, we, we play an important role in being able to support students in any kind of higher ed ambitions.

Therefore, for these two participants location in the North, their geographic location has determined much about the demographics of the students for whom they work to support, which in turn has impacted their conception of the role of their institution and their roles as SAS professionals.

FRANCOPHONE INSTITUTIONS

There was a stark difference among the participants in their conception of professional identity between those working at Francophone institutions and those at

Anglophone institutions. The three participants working at Francophone institutions were the only individuals in this study who did not identify as a student affairs professional. Jeanine's primary professional identity was as a psychologist, but she also identified as a manager or director. Colette's professional identity was as a "professional in a management role," and Henri conceived of himself as a "professional working in student services." Unlike each of the 22 participants from Anglophone institutions, the idea of being a "student affairs and services professional" did not resonate at all with these three Francophone participants. My sole participant from an Anglophone institution in Québec actually predicted this result. When discussing the idea of professional identity in student affairs and services, Jim shared he had previously considered the nature of the profession within Québec. Regarding student affairs and services practitioners at Francophone institutions in the province, Jim had this to say:

> They don't identify as a professional field. They're administrators. Their identity is administrators. It's that old term that personnel and administrators are whatever. They don't see themselves as how theory and research influences their practices. It's "here's an administrative procedure, here's a service, I provide it. We create efficiencies like webinars, we find ways to streamline through technology, of how to deliver more efficient services." But those are administrators.

As a senior student affairs and services professional in Québec, Jim has had occasion to meet a number of student services practitioners from other institutions around the province, including Francophone institutions. His ideas are based on his own observations from these encounters. At the end of our interview, because I was using the snowballing method

of sampling, I asked Jim if he could supply me with the names of a few other SAS professionals who might be interested in participating in my research, and I indicated I was also interested in speaking to French-speakers and people who work at Francophone institutions. In response to the idea of me recruiting participants from Francophone institutions, Jim replied, "That will be very difficult. There is still the Francophone-Anglophone divide. They don't identity as a profession in Québec." I asked Jim to explain what he thinks accounts for this divide in the profession. He continued:

> They're service delivery folks, administrators. They don't identify with CACUSS, they don't identify with that identity. And so, because CACUSS doesn't deliver a lot of its content in French, it's a chicken and egg thing, like, even when we deliver it in French, they don't come anyways.

Jim went on to explain that, in his opinion, the difference in the approach to student affairs and services at Francophone institutions originates from "a more cultural identity of bureaucracy" stemming from a "French civil service bureaucratic tradition." Since the French civil service is a notoriously complex administration, often characterized as an institution with excessive red tape and paperwork, this reference by Jim paints a somber picture of SAS practitioners whose work activities include only monotonous administrative functions such as paperwork, conference calls, and emails. This was, in fact, the image Jim was intending to convey, to contrast the more familiar idea of a SAS professional whose efforts are centered on holistic student development and student engagement, including many high-spirited activities to support a vibrant campus life. Jim thought that the Anglophone-Francophone divide in student affairs and services is so wide, he even joked that if I sent my recruitment email message to someone at a Francophone institution,

"they wouldn't even know what you're talking about" and they would likely be asking themselves, "What the heck is a student affairs professional?" It turns out that I did in fact experience difficulty in recruiting Francophone participants. Several of my recruitment email messages sent to professionals at French-speaking institutions were not answered, while I received polite refusals from several others. The three Francophone participants I did recruit, however, offered some valuable insight related to Jim's observations.

Colette, who described her position as the Head of Student Services, described her role as much more politicized than roughly equivalent positions at Anglophone institutions. She explained the thrust of her job is related to negotiating with student associations:

> Le plus important, c'est mon rôle, un peu de Dean of Student, j'ai ce rôle un peu, contrairement à ce qui se passe dans les universités anglophones, j'assume le rôle de relations, de bonnes relations, avec les associations étudiantes facultaires qui sont les grandes associations de l'université; il y en a 7. Ce sont des associations qui ont des mandats politiques sur le campus.
>
> *The most important, is my role as Dean of Students; I do have that role, and it isn't what happens in Anglophone universities, I am responsible for maintaining good relationships with the students' associations of various faculties. There are seven of them. These are associations, unions that have a political mandate on campus.*

Colette later clarified that Francophone institutions in Québec do not have positions called Deans of Students, but her role could, in part, be seen as encompassing the duties a Dean of Students typically has at an Anglophone university. Colette emphasized the importance of her relationships with student associations, and highlighted the complexity of supporting so many student groups who each organize their own student activities on campus.

> Au total, on a environ 80 associations étudiantes de programmation donc reliées au programme d'études et on a 33 groupes d'étudiants. Un groupe étudiant, c'est heu...bah l'association des étudiants musulmans par exemple, l'association des étudiants, heu, asiatiques, des groupes d'intérêts comme ça. Ils s'occupent de travailler à les soutenir dans l'organisation des activités sur le campus.
>
> *In total there are about 80 student associations linked to program studies and 33 student groups. A student group is, for instance, the association of Muslim students, the association of Asian students, interest groups like that. This section supports students' groups in organizing activities on campus.*

In order to understand the significance of student associations in Québec, and therefore the significance of Colette's role in negotiating with them, it is important to briefly reflect on the unique political history of higher education in this province.

The education system in Québec was run by the clergy until the 1960s, but student associations had responsibility for sport and cultural events on campuses. It was during this period when the tradition of student activism in Québec started, with the first student strike in 1958 aimed at abolishing student fees and improving accessibility to higher education (Association des Juristes Progressistes [AJP], 2012). Student associations in Québec radicalized during the 1960s in response to major reforms to the province's higher education system; their activism opposed lectures and exams and called for their co-management in universities (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014). Today, Québec students are represented by four main province-wide associations: the Québec Federation of University Students (FEUQ); the Québec Federation of CÉGEP Students (FECQ); the Association for a Student Syndical Solidarity (ASSE); and, the Discussion Table for Québec Students (TaCEQ). While each has their own mandate, in general these associations lobby the

government to advocate to freeze tuition fees (or, in the case of the ASSE, to abolish tuition fees), improve quality and accessibility of higher education, and to protect certain rights, such as Aboriginal rights and gender equality (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014). Unlike students in other Canadian provinces, Québec students have regularly used strikes as the primary tactic in support of the student movement's demands, and many of their strike events have indeed resulted in gains. In 1968, students went on strike to democratize teaching methods, to create a second French-language university in Montreal, and to freeze tuition fees. In 1974 a student strike was directed at abolishing aptitude tests for university admission and for increased funding and loans. Other strikes occurred in 1978, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1994, 1996, 2005, and 2012 (AJP, 2012; Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014). With permanent staff, automatic membership fees, and the membership of all Québec students, student associations are major players in the province's education discourse and have the power to effect change, especially when their efforts converge on common objectives on particular issues.

Given the realities of student activism in Québec, and the complex relationships between student associations and the administrations of post-secondary institutions, it is perhaps unsurprising that negotiating with student associations plays such a central role in the work of SAS staff, such as Colette. As Colette reiterated, due to her role as the intermediary between the university administration and the various student associations, her role is distinctive from those at Anglophone institutions:

> Et notre fonction, au Québec, je pense qu'elle se distingue aussi à ce niveau-là avec les, d'avec les universités anglophones aux États-Unis et au Canada, les directions de services aux étudiants, en général, dans le milieu anglophone que ce

soit canadien ou américain, ont vraiment une fonction de direction de services c'est à dire d'une offre de services plutôt que de jouer aussi le rôle de la relation politique avec les associations étudiantes. Alors je pense que ça, c'est une distinction qui est très très importante pour les directions de services aux étudiants au Québec.

So, our role, our position in Québec is distinct from that of our equivalents in Anglophone universities in the United States or in Canada because of this. In the Anglophone world, in Canada or in the United States, heads of student services really just have a function of service management, that is to say that they offer services rather than play the role of negotiating politically with students associations. So I think that it is a very important distinction for student services in Québec.

While SAS professionals at Anglophone institutions in Canada may disagree with Colette's characterization of their role as one of "service management," I believe her main contention is prudent—that the nature of student activism on Francophone campuses makes student services positions, particularly at the senior level, distinctive from similar positions in Anglophone Canada. This distinction manifests, perhaps, as a more administrative and managerial approach to student services, leading to the lack of a clear professional identity in the field. As Henri explained, the concept of "student affairs professional" is not something recognized at Francophone institutions. He stated:

> En fait, cette notion que les gens qui travaillent dans les services aux étudiants, c'est une profession en tant que telle, elle est pas au Québec là. C'est pas une notion reconnue. On va plutôt parler de professionnels de par leur compétence à l'entrée dans les services aux étudiants. Par exemple si tu es un psychologue, ça va être un psychologue, si il est un conseilleur d'emploi, ça va être un conseilleur

d'emploi, on va rarement positionner les gens comme professionnels de services aux étudiants.

I think that this concept that working in student services is a profession as such, doesn't really exist in Québec. It is not a concept that is recognized. We will talk about professionalism based on the competence of staff members when they came to work in student services. For instance, if you were brought in as a psychologist, you are a psychologist, if you were an employment counsellor, you are an employment counsellor. People will rarely be considered as student services professionals.

This testimony from Henri corroborates Jim's observation that student affairs and services is not identified as a profession in Québec. Jeanine's well-defined professional identity as a psychologist bears witness to Henri's assertions above, as does Colette's avoidance of the "student affairs and services professional" label. The idea of professional identity in student affairs and services seemed to perplex Jeanine and, as she stated, it "bothered" her:

Claire: Comment est-ce que vous décririez votre identité professionnelle exactement. Si je vous demandais de décrire ça en une phrase, ça serait quoi?

Jeanine: Bein ça, ça m'embêtait un peu quand j'ai reçu le courriel, je ne savais pas trop à quoi, on faisait référence.

Claire: How would you describe your professional identity exactly? If I asked you to describe it in a sentence, what would it be?

Jeanine: Well, that bothered me a little when I got the e-mail. I didn't quite know what was meant.

The topic and purpose of this research study was explained to Jeanine in advance of data collection in the same manner as all other participants, yet Jeanine still seemed confused about the notion professional identity in SAS. It was at this point in the interview that she

stated she was a psychologist and that that was her primary professional identity. It appeared as though she answered all other interview questions from the standpoint of being a psychologist rather than as SAS practitioner. Even at the end of the interview, after discussing professional identity for more than 50 minutes, Jeanie still expressed puzzlement with the concept of professional identity in student affairs and services:

> Claire: Il y a autre chose que vous vouliez ajouter?
>
> Jeanine: Bah, en fait j'aimerais bien comprendre l'hypothèse de recherche. Revenir en arrière, [PAUSE] parce que, parce que, l'identité professionnelle, quelle est-elle?
>
> *Claire: Is there something else you wish to add?*
>
> *Jeanine: Well, in fact I would like to understand the hypothesis behind the research. I'd like to go back, [PAUSE] because, because, the professional identity, what is it?*

Jeanine's uneasiness with the topic and purpose of this research offers some confirmation to Jim's prediction that Francophone participants would have trouble understanding my use of term professional identity with respect to SAS since they generally do not conceive of SAS as a distinct profession at all.

When asked about his engagement with professional associations, Henri explained that he is a member of CACUSS, but discovered the association only when its annual conference happened to be held in Québec near to his institution. Henri stated:

> Moi depuis 4 ans, puis ça fait, 7, 8, 9, 8 ans que je suis ici, et la première chose que j'ai demandé c'était est-ce qu' il y a une association professionnelle et on m'a répondu que non. Et, quand le congrès de l'association canadienne a eu lieu à Montréal à McGill, à l'université anglophone, c'est là que j'ai appris l'existence

> et on y est allé et depuis ce temps-là je participe. Donc depuis 4 ans je participe à la ASEUCC.
>
> *It has been four years, I have been here for 7, 8, 9, no 8 years now, and the first thing that I asked was, whether or not there was a professional organization, and I was told there wasn't. And when the Canadian association conference took place in Montreal at McGill, the Anglophone university, that's when I learned of its existence. I attended the conference and for the last 4 years I have become a member of CACUSS.*

Soon after joining his student services department, Henri had inquired as to whether there was a professional association, but his colleagues incorrectly informed him that there was not. It was not until four years later, when McGill hosted the annual CACUSS conference in Montreal, when Henri discovered its existence. Henri attended that 2013 conference, but has not attended another one since. He also admits, that while he is a member of CACUSS, he has not benefited from any professional development opportunities offered by the association. The fact that Henri and all of his student services colleagues were oblivious to the existence of CACUSS prior to the 2013 conference in Montreal further illustrates the Anglophone-Francophone divide in the field of student affairs and services that Jim and Colette both described. Jim noted that CACUSS does not offer a lot of its material and resources in French and that most of the Canadian student affairs and services literature is in English. These factors certainly impact the awareness of CACUSS among French-speaking practitioners and their level of engagement with the association. Without a strong connection to CACUSS, or to ASEUCC, as the association is known in French, SAS practitioners at Francophone institutions largely do not experience this influence in their professional identity development.

INSTITUTION TYPE

Another factor that influenced how some participants thought about their role and how they made meaning of their professional identity as a SAS professional was related to the type of institution at which they worked. Specifically, notable differences were observed between those who worked at a university, college, and polytechnic institute. As previously mentioned, many participants at both universities and colleges experienced a feeling of marginalization on their campuses, with academic staff often undervaluing the significance of SAS departments. Dana, however, noted this marginalization was no longer her experience since leaving a university and taking on a SAS role at a polytechnic institute.

> If anything, here I feel like I have to work to make myself approachable to those people; that they see me in what's called an AVP role, and they hold that in quite high esteem, and they hope that they would have the privilege of a few minutes of my time, which actually is uncomfortable for me.

Dana continued:

> I think collaboration between the academic and the non-academic side happens much more easily here, and I have lots of folks who have the same level of education as their instructor colleagues, and I think those barriers, they just don't exist.

While Dana and other participants noted a tension between faculty and student affairs and services, indicating that efforts to collaborate are often impeded by faculty resistance, Dana noted that there are no such barriers in her polytechnic environment. Rather, faculty and other colleagues hold her and her department in high regard. Whereas she felt that much of the tension in a university environment is connected to those with Ph.D.'s thinking less

of those without, Dana believes the largely equivalent qualification level across her current institution helps avoid such "academic snobbery," as she put it. Therefore, while SAS professionals at universities often face comments and behavior from others at their institution which may cause them to question their own credibility and value, Dana's experiences suggest that the environment at polytechnic institutes may not similarly compromise the professional identity of SAS practitioners.

Another difference among the participants related to the type of institution at which they work was the overall role or mission they attributed to their institution. Such a difference was most notable between those working at a university and those working at a small college. Participants working at a university commonly described the purpose of their institution as preparing individuals for productive contribution to society through scholarship and character development. The following quotations represent this dominant theme:

> I believe in the university as a as a conversation centre and as a place where people can step into new ideas and grow to more of who they are and I do think that there is, like I believe that that can benefit the culture as a whole and so civic engagement and um citizenship all of those things are I think are part of that too. (Maureen)

> At the root of it I think the university is still to provide a place of learning and scholarship and, um, like, I really do think in my heart of hearts, it's a place where you come to learn and grow. (Amanda)

This aim to create prepared minds and foster civic engagement relates back to the identification of citizenship development as a central part of what it means to be a student

affairs professional. In addition to this purpose, many interviewees based at universities also identified career development as a main function of their institutions. Rather than identifying career development and character/citizenship development as being in tension with one another, participants generally explained these two purposes as supporting one another. Barry paired "career and life development" together in this way:

> I mean it's career and life development. So, it's preparing for moving into the next phase of life, whether it be a career in academia or a job somewhere else, or moving on, doing whatever's next. And not just what's next, but a life of next. That is probably what I would say the role of universities is: career and life development.

While the broad institutional aims of academic learning, citizenship development, and career development were also mentioned by participants working at colleges, these professionals, particular those at small colleges, also seemed to identify a more specific local community-based institutional purpose, and a mission directed at helping community members often considered as at-risk students. Nancy's commentary represents this perspective:

> The role of colleges in my opinion […] is to support some of our most vulnerable in society. So, we have, like I said, a lot of mature students who are, maybe, going through a terrible divorce and transitioning to a new career, or have had some kind of workplace injury, or are recovering from addictions and trying to go back to college. We have a lot of single parent students. We have a lot of students who have some form of intellectual disability and are still trying to get an education. We have a lot of students who are coming from other small rural communities and the transition to a larger institution would just be, a bit too overwhelming and this is a good stepping stone.

Nancy continued:

> We also have a lot of students that haven't finished high school, and are here upgrading, so I think the college plays a really important role in supporting those folks that are going through kind of tough times, or maybe also don't have the financial ability to, to really go anywhere else, actually.

Given that Nancy understands her college's role as supporting vulnerable groups in society and acknowledging the specific demographic realities of her college's student body, which differ from those at most universities, much of Nancy's work revolves around meeting students' needs to help them overcome significant life challenges. While universities have counselling departments and accessibility/disability services departments whose staff work to meet similar student challenges, Nancy described that attentiveness to her students' and community's challenges permeates all of her department's student life and student engagement programming. For Nancy, it is the College's role, and therefore her role, to support members of the community who are experiencing difficulties. She described the college almost as a community rehabilitation center, whose function it is to treat those who are suffering from "tough times," where the treatment is training and support to upgrade skills or to pursue a new career. Additionally, unlike any of the participants at universities, Nancy described the importance of fostering strong partnerships within the community in order to benefit both students and community organizations.

> A big part of what I do is the "fun stuff" and the student life, but also a lot of individual support and leadership building and I do try a lot to connect the community to the college and the college to the community. So I bring in different campaigns going on in the community. A big one that I've integrated in annually now for the college to partner on is the [local anti-violence against

> women campaign], to raise a bit of awareness for that, and those kinds of things. So that's maybe the, the "connector."

Nancy's clear sub-identity as an educator informs her activities around supporting holistic development and outside-the-classroom learning, and given her college environment, this part of her professional identity is defined by an emphasis on supporting particularly vulnerable students and working to connect her students with wider community supports. Often serving a population of students with more diverse socioeconomic backgrounds than that of most universities, college campuses offer an environment in which student affairs professionals encounter a different set of interactions than those working at universities. Supporting vulnerable students and building community connections may indeed be elements of one's professional identity regardless of the institution where one works, however, these role-based identities may become more salient for Nancy and others who work at small colleges given these institutions' distinctive features.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The perceived support for student affairs and services from senior leadership was another factor that influenced participants' professional identity. Several of the participants described negative consequences to their professional identity when senior leaders at their institutions made changes to the organizational structure or to names and purviews of departments without adequate consultation of explanation. Renee, for example, explained how such behaviour from leadership made her and her SAS colleagues feel insecure in their roles:

> It's been an interesting couple of years to see the shift of leadership at the higher level. At the deputy provost level, we had someone who we knew who was in a role that moved on to another role, someone new came in, who really we had to get to know, who really moved things around. We didn't really know why, and all you need sometimes is just a reason for change, that's all. Even if we don't really like it, it's just tell me why, as opposed to feeling a bit in the dark. With that was a bit of uncertainty, a bit of people not really knowing what's going on, and I think it played into how people were feeling about their jobs. Certainly, played into the levels of insecurity.

As Renee explained, when decisions are made by senior leaders which result in significant institutional change, employees can be left feeling insecure about their roles, particularly when adequate communication from the leadership is lacking. When units and departments are shuffled among portfolios, or when key staff members are reassigned, for example, individuals may feel unsure about how they fit into the new structure. Student affairs and services professionals may be particularly vulnerable to such insecurity given their already marginalized position in the institution. Paul described a situation when his department was removed from one director's portfolio and added to another director's portfolio. Regarding this change, Paul stated:

> It's been an interesting few years here and it's, it's been an identity crisis to tell you, to tell you the truth. Being here for the last couple of years while there's been lots of changes. It's like, who are we and what do we do and where do we fit into the bigger picture? And, you know, you've gotta translate that outta here too. So, what are you in the bigger picture? You know?

Paul described that the shifting of his department signaled a change in philosophy about the mission and purpose of his work. The messages conveyed by senior leadership about

the nature of his role, did not match the meanings Paul ascribed to his student affairs professional identity, resulting in instances when his identity as a learning-centered educator was not verified. The new administrative structure, and the new philosophical approach it signaled, meant that Paul was left questioning his role and those of his colleagues. Paul described it as an "identity crisis" since his previously established conception of his role as a student affairs professional was now being called into question. Although the change has meant that Paul's role has become more focused on delivering a service and less on fostering student engagement and learning, Paul shared that he tries as best he can to stay true to himself and his professional identity by focusing on learning in his interactions with students. In this way, Paul is actively resisting organizational change to maintain his identity standard.

Amanda explained that the previous leadership at her institution did not seem to value the work of student affairs and services, whereas the new leadership does. In the commentary below, Amanda first describes how the behaviour and values of the previous administration made her feel about her role, and then moves on to explain how the change in leadership has positively impacted her own sense of her identity as a professional:

> The previous leadership was, um, purely research-focused. While extremely important and I respect that need and that approach to give time and energy and investment into that area of the institution, um, there was very little attention given to a student life and that was felt across the board. It was felt, sort of, in lack of attention, lack of investment in terms of resources as well as lack of vision or anything that we could of attach ourselves to.

Under the previous leadership, Amanda shares that the feeling among SAS staff was that there was nothing they "could attach themselves to." This feeling of being a loose end is similar to what Paul is experiencing at this institution where he is faced with asking himself where he fits into the bigger picture. Not having a clear sense of how one's position and professional role align with the vision and philosophy of senior leadership fosters a sense of self-doubt where one's worth and value as a professional is called into question. Renee described this feeling as "insecurity," Paul described it as an "identity crisis," and Amanda described this feeling as not having anything among the perceived institutional priorities to attach oneself to. The recent change in leadership at Amanda's institution, however, has had positive effects for Amanda's professional identity. Amanda explains the impact in this way:

> In the last couple of months we've been fortunate to have a, uh, someone in the leadership position who is extremely the *opposite.* […] Right now what we're hearing and seeing and feeling in a much different and more poignant way is that student life matters, student experience matters, that um, those interactions for students both from the top level, from their level all the way down to our level and to the level of the person who takes their money in the dining room and the residence, you know? That every interaction with students at every different level matters and I think that um, that just makes, I think as a student affairs professional, as someone whose currently working hard to impact the student experience and student life and to support students inside and out of the classroom makes you feel valued, um, a part of something greater, a vision and a strategy that you can start to see yourself in and something that you feel you're working towards or working with the leadership on even when you don't get that face time with that person.

The new leadership at Amanda's institution is communicating a philosophy about student learning, specifically regarding holistic cocurricular student learning, which matches Amanda's own philosophy and approach. Therefore, Amanda's professional identity is now being verified, leading to her experience of positive emotions, such as satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem (Burke & Stets, 2009). Amanda can now "see" how she fits into the overall institutional vision, and this feels that her contribution is a valued "part of something greater." Whereas Paul and Renee attribute their experience of an identity crisis and feeling of insecurity to the behaviour and perceived philosophy of the organization leadership, the new leadership at Amanda's institution is responsible for Amanda's sense of belonging and the verification of her professional identity.

THE CANADIAN IDENTITY FACTOR, EH

In discussing the nature of the student affairs and services field nationally, many participants shared aspects of the profession in Canada they considered to be different from the reality of student affairs and services elsewhere. While one or two brief comments by a few participants did refer to comparisons with several countries and regions, the vast majority of the discussion comparing Canadian SAS with the field in other contexts referred to comparisons with the United States. A focus on comparing Canadian SAS with the profession in the United States is not at all surprising given the huge relative size of the American profession, the proximity of Canada to the United States, and the fact that the two countries share English as a common language. Undeniably, the presence of the United States impacts many aspects of Canadian society and culture for these same reasons, and has historically been a significant factor in Canadians' own conception of a Canadian

identity. In many ways, with the dominance of Hollywood and American media, and the U.S.A.'s rise in military, industrial, and technological strength, a challenge for English-speaking Canada has been to distinguish itself from its southern neighbour. Speaking to an American audience in Washington in 1969, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau shared a now famous analogy to describe Canada's precarious place next to the United States: "Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt" (as cited in Lennox, 2009, p. 7). While the late Prime Minister may have been referring to the Canada-U.S.A. political relationship with national and foreign policies in mind, this characterization applies equally to social and cultural influences. With the relative maturity of student affairs in the United States, established graduate programs, and large active professional organizations such as ACPA and NASPA, the influence of American student affairs is significant for the Canadian profession. The influence of the American profession is perhaps not as sharply felt in French Canada, which has the "natural buffer" of a different language. At least for Anglophone Canadian SAS practitioners, the significant influence of the American profession creates some desire to distinguish Canadian student affairs and services from the field in the United States. The distinctive aspects of the Canadian profession, some of which were discussed by participants as well as explained in Chapter 2, can become important aspects of Canadian practitioners' professional identity. The distinctive elements of SAS in Canada discussed by the participants included: tolerance and inclusivity; approach to student mental health; support for Aboriginal learners; nationwide professional connectedness; and, professional preparation. As a final note in

this section I share comments made by one participant related to her frustration with the constant comparisons between SAS in Canada and the United States.

Tolerance and Inclusiveness

Several participants spoke about the social and cultural differences between Canada and United States with respect to tolerance and acceptance to explain some of the distinctions they have observed in student affairs and services in the two contexts. With reference to an American-based webinar he had participated in, Paul pointed to what he described as greater acknowledgement and acceptance of gender identities among Canadian students compared to students in the United States:

> So like a couple years ago we did a training on gender inclusive washrooms, because that's where we were headed and we wanted to do some research and some education on it for us as professionals. So we'd done a webinar, I can't remember who had done it, but it wasn't really applicable to us because, like, socially, we were there. Like for us in this environment and our students and all that, the things that this presenter had were not, it wasn't social issues that we had here. So unfortunately, it was, you know, a waste of two hours in the webinar. Because we didn't have to educate our students on a lot of the sensitivities because for the most part they're accepting.

Paul's contention was that because Canadian post-secondary students are already accepting and respectful of gender identities, targeted programming and activities aimed at engaging students in discussion and critical reflection about issues related to gender is not applicable in the Canadian context. While research studies and various polls do consistently find that social attitudes in Canada concerning gender and sexuality are more tolerant than such attitudes in the United States (e.g., Andersen & Fetner, 2008; Pew Research Center, 2013),

the notion that "we don't have to educate our students" about gender equity issues is an exaggeration of the social progressiveness of Canadian post-secondary students. Research by Perry (2011) has confirmed, like those in the United States, Canadian college and university campuses are sites where students are victimized by hate crimes, including hate crimes based on gender and sexual identities. Boucher (2013, para. 21) has asked "whether Canadians are slipping too easily into a narcissism of small differences," whereby they tend to exaggerate differences between Canada and the United States, believing that their national identity depends on the extent of such differences. Paul's claims may be an example of this phenomenon rather than a true reflection of the socio-cultural environment. Regardless, Paul's beliefs about tolerance in Canada is part of how he distinguishes the Canadian student affairs field from that of the United States, and thus impacts his sense of his professional identity.

Like Paul, Sophie also shared an experience of attending a professional development session in the United States. She discussed how the different legal landscape in Canada versus the U.S.A. can impact the approach to some aspects of SAS. She explained:

> One of the things that I also notice is that, when I went to specific training around gender and sexual diversity, I went, it was in Oregon, […] And the focus was so much into still, um, fighting a battle, like you know, we need to fight the human rights part. We had different circumstances in different states, one person is one person in one state, but cannot be the same person in another state, you know what I mean? Try to get married here, cannot get married there, and have rights here, doesn't have rights there, et cetera, et cetera. Coming from Canada where, yeah we have a lot to do, but the battle of the rights, the rights are there. […]

> Now, yes you need to enforce them, you need to educate, um, so the work is more towards how to express education, diversity, how to educate everybody and challenge prejudices and assumptions and stereotypes and all that, but it's not so much around the legal battle.

Sophie recalled that much of the focus of the training session she attended in Oregon was on interpreting various state laws that limit individual freedoms in an effort to inform higher education policy and practice in the context of an American legal environment that often oppresses sexual and gender minority groups. Unlike Paul, Sophie admitted that there is much work to do in Canada regarding social justice and diversity education, but explained that, in her opinion, the legal landscape in Canada makes this work easier than in the U.S.A. where a variety of state laws seem to impede progress. Sophie's point is exemplified by the recent controversies surrounding some U.S. states' so-called "bathroom bills," such as North Carolina's House Bill 2 and Texas's proposed House Bill 2899. Laws such as these actively discriminate against transgender people, and impact the ability of universities and colleges to offer safe and inclusive learning environments for all students. In Canada, by contrast, the Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression. Universities and colleges anywhere in Canada can therefore provide gender-inclusive bathrooms, for example, without confronting legal barriers. For Sophie, the more progressive and inclusive legal landscape in Canada, as she sees it, contributes to the distinctive nature of Canadian student affairs and services.

Approach to Student Mental Health

Several participants distinguished Canadian student affairs and services from the American profession in terms of how students' mental health is supported in the two national contexts. Kevin, for example, stated:

> I think what may be different in Canada is I think there may be less stigma around mental illness. We have probably better advocacy in that area and more will to support students rather than to deflect students away from the system.

Supporting student mental health does seem to be a central focus in Canadian SAS currently, to a degree not evident in the American profession. Much of the current focus on post-secondary student mental health in Canada was triggered by a tragic wave of student deaths at Queen's University in 2010-11, when, over the course of 14 months, the campus lost six students, including three by confirmed suicide. The shock associated with these deaths on the part of students, staff, faculty, and community members alike, together with the media attention these incidents garnered, brought the issue of student mental health to the national level ("Mental health services," 2013). Whereas much of the previous efforts related to mental health concerns on post-secondary campuses was concerned with individual treatment and security dimensions, such as early identification for risk management, the focus now in Canadian student affairs and services is centered on a foundational interest in student support and development. Especially in the last several years, student mental health has been a major theme of regional and national conferences as well as the topic of much recent Canadian-based higher education scholarship (e.g., Kruisselbrink Flatt, 2013; Massey, Brooks, & Burrow, 2015; Regehr, Glancy, & Pitts,

2013). Additionally, major national student-led initiatives have sprung up, such as Jack.org and Unleash the Noise, which provide advocacy for student mental health and venues for the sharing of ideas and strategies to further support the mental wellbeing of post-secondary students. Many Canadian student affairs and services divisions now routinely provide their frontline staff and student leaders with training in mental health first aid and suicide prevention, and such efforts have been shown to increase knowledge of mental health, enhance sensitivity, and raise confidence to intervene and assist individuals experiencing a mental health issue (Massey et al., 2015). CACUSS has partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) to help institutions support and strengthen student mental health on their campuses. In their joint publication, *Post-Secondary Student Mental Health: Guide to a Systemic Approach*, CACUSS and CMHA (2015) offer a "resource to support the creation of campus communities that are deeply conducive to transformative learning and mental well-being through a systemic approach to student mental health" (p. 5). Altogether, the extent and nature of the emphasis on mental health in Canadian SAS signals an approach to student mental health that extends the focus beyond the individual and beyond strategies of treatment and risk-management, to a systemic approach aimed at the whole campus including its environment, organizational structure, policies, and practices. Tim's comments about mental health support in Canada speak to this paradigmatic difference:

> Tim: […] Mental health is another one, their approaches in mental health support, a lot of what we see is being somewhat different, I mean, then the way it is in Canada, and how we do things. Those are the things that I would probably, if I was to say where I see that the difference is. […]

Kyle: So, thanks for sharing those things with me. Maybe we can go back just to the point you mentioned about mental health. What is it that you have noticed as different south of the border or elsewhere, compared to in Canada from a student affairs perspective?

Tim: Well, from the student affairs, um, from the mental health side specifically, I see it more as, um, [PAUSE] it just- and I have a very cursory understanding of it Kyle, but it just seems to me that the American model seems a lot more reactionary than probably what it is in Canada.

Kyle: Okay.

Tim: We seek to understand. They try to seek to contain.

Both Kevin's and Tim's observations that the field of SAS in Canada is perhaps more advanced than the American profession in supporting students' mental health reflects the progress that has been made in Canada, especially in the last several years, which has been a product of commitment and extensive collaboration from schools across the country, CACUSS, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the CMHA, and others ("Mental health services," 2013). Such a collaborative effort on the national scale to systemically support post-secondary student mental health is yet to be seen in the United States, and thus this aspect of the Canadian profession is noted as a distinguishing feature by several of the participants.

Support for Aboriginal Learners

When distinguishing Canadian SAS from the field in other contexts, the point that was mentioned most often by far is related to the focus on support for Indigenous learners in Canada. Nicole stated, "I think probably what's unique about in Canada would be that focus on Indigenous, supporting Indigenous students." She continued by saying, "I think

focusing on certain um, you know, traditionally marginalized groups isn't uncommon in the States, I know that's also a big focus, but I think that in terms of Canadian, it would be that Indigenous focus for sure." Here, Nicole is acknowledging that supporting traditionally marginalized groups is a central theme in American student affairs as well, however a specific focus on supporting Indigenous students does not exist to any great extent in the American student affairs discourse. Kevin also mentioned the Canadian student affairs and services focus on supporting Aboriginal students, contextualizing the issue with some description about the need to support these learners:

> In Canada I think we may have greater focus, I believe we have greater focus on support for Aboriginal learners as well. And it's based on the Truth and Reconciliation work that's been done recently and reported on and also the acknowledgement that if I'm an Aboriginal person, I'm far more likely to end up in care as a child, I'm far more likely to end up in prison as an adult, I'm a lot less likely to graduate from high school, I'm less likely to apply to post-secondary and if I get there I'm more likely to disappear and nobody's going to notice. So what service supports can we put in place to ensure the success of Aboriginal learners and to create community.

Kevin's acknowledgement of the barriers faced by Aboriginal students is unfortunately the reality for too many. Given that many Aboriginal students experience far more marginalization than their non-Aboriginal peers, they are more likely to face challenges navigating university and college systems, thereby preventing them from fully engaging in their academic pursuits and experiencing success (Gallop, 2016; Pidgeon, 2008; Pijl-Zieber & Hagen, 2011). As suggested by Kevin, when SAS professionals understand these significant barriers faced by Aboriginal students, they are in a position to provide targeted

support services. Many Canadian university and colleges across the country have dedicated Aboriginal student centers or resource offices whose staff work to address the unique academic, social, and cultural needs of Indigenous students (Pidgeon, 2016). By providing culture-specific activities and resources, Aboriginal student centers have been highly successful in promoting Aboriginal student academic and social engagement. Research has shown that such efforts contribute to retaining this group within the post-secondary education system by providing an environment whereby Aboriginal learners experience an increase in self-esteem, confidence, and capacity, and are therefore more equipped to face challenges (Martin & Kipling, 2006). Marker (2004) has indicated that while Aboriginal students continue to face significant obstacles at Canadian institutions, "American universities are much more culturally impenetrable places for Indigenous students due to the kaleidoscope of Indian stereotypes embedded in the American psyche and because of the colossal inertia of American ethnocentrism" (p. 175). As implied by participants in this study, support for Indigenous students does not seem to be prevalent nor a priority in the work of SAS professionals in the United States.

Beth had previously held a student affairs position in the United States, and thus her perspective is slightly different than most other Canadian practitioners. Acknowledging this difference in her perspective, Beth stated:

> A lot of my professional experience has actually been in the U.S., and so I think I feel a little differently than most Canadians about the differences between the U.S. system and the Canadian system. I, perhaps, don't see as many gaps between Canada and the U.S. as some other Canadians do, so I'll use that as a caveat. I think one of the larges differences in terms of Canadian is probably our history

> with Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal students and the importance of the integration of that into the work that we do. However, I think that that probably could go under a social justice umbrella, which is obviously a huge focus in the U.S. So, I actually don't see there being much difference. […] I think students are students. That's always been my feeling. Although we might call things differently, although we might have different student groups that have different needs.

While she doesn't consider there to be much difference between the student affairs and services profession in Canada compared to the United States, Beth does recognize the Aboriginal component as a feature of the Canadian profession that is less emphasized in the American context. Rather than conceiving of Aboriginal student support as a point of distinction, however, Beth understands this Canadian focus as a manifestation of the social justice approach in SAS common to both national contexts. Regardless, similar to the way in which mental health support was described as a distinguishing aspect of Canadian student affairs and services, when participants described the focus on Aboriginal student support, they did so with a sense of pride in the Canadian profession. For some of the participants, the distinctiveness of Aboriginal student support in Canadian SAS seemed to be internalized as an element of their professional identity.

Nationwide Professional Connectedness

In considering how the Canadian national context of SAS is distinctive, Jennifer discussed the high degree of connectedness among professionals in the field across the country:

> One of the first things that comes to mind is that we are a younger profession than our colleagues in the States. I like to think that we in Canadian universities and

> colleges are growing up together, sharing programs and policies, and supporting and learning from each other as we move forward. I sense that universities in the States are more independent of one another.

This comradery in the profession, and especially the sense of community that exists among those active in CACUSS, was a persistent theme throughout most interviews. Jennifer elaborated on the benefits of the collaborative and supportive nature of the national field:

> One of my favourite aspects of my job is that I never feel I have to figure out something on my own or deal with a situation by myself. Not only do I have my colleagues in my own department, but I have trusted colleagues who are a phone call or email away throughout the country. This network is extremely important to me and allows me to support my students all the better.

While Jennifer and many other interviewees identified this sense of togetherness in the Canadian profession, it is also true that the Francophone participants in this study, as well as those in Massey and Massey's (2015) research, reported a sense of detachment from the broader Canadian field. The feedback Massey and Massey received from Francophone practitioners led to their recommendation that CACUSS should "develop and implement a comprehensive plan to engage the Francophone community" (p. 78). As has already been discussed, the French interviews in this study revealed a distinct Anglophone-Francophone divide within the profession, and thus the close ties that many other Canadian student affairs and services professionals experience with their colleagues across the country may not equally apply to those at French-speaking institutions.

Professional Preparation

While several participants spoke about the field of SAS in Canada as having recently matured, or as having become more professional in recent years, the notion that the profession in Canada is inferior to or less professional than the field in the United States was not an idea communicated by many participants. In fact, such an opinion was touched on by just one participant, Barry, when he stated:

> I think we also don't have the same level, when you compare to the U.S. system, where they have taken the word "profession" to the real definition of what profession is, where you can do an undergrad in student affairs and go on and have this sort of progressive career based specifically around credentialization. With the right education behind it, of course, but we don't have that. I really think more and more people are required to have graduate degrees to enter student affairs jobs, but it's still not consistent.

Here Barry is suggesting that the student affairs field in the United States is more clearly a profession than the Canadian field, especially due to the well-defined career pathway that exists with graduate-level preparation programs at American universities. Although Barry pointed to the prevalence of specialized professional preparation offered through graduate degree programs as a strength of the American system, several participants actually characterized the less specialized preparation required or expected for entry-level positions in Canadian SAS as an advantage. Jim, for example, spoke of the benefit of hiring staff with diverse backgrounds:

> I would say, there's still a benefit where I've been able to hire people from various disciplines, whether it's from their student degrees, that has nothing to do with student affairs work, but I can make the linkages of how their knowledge

> base and their skills and experience would lend itself so well to this work. So, my labour pool is, in fact, larger. I'm not diminishing my labour pool because I want some residence life folk who have gone to every conference, presented at every conference, can put on their resume that they've presented all these topics, created community building, you know what I mean? "I was the executive vice president of whatever association," those folks. Because I'm still coming from the mindset that that's great, I will take that into consideration, but I'm still very open to hiring people outside of that demand. Because I know we need to diversify the pool of knowledge and experience. My understanding of the U.S. is that the pipeline is very much so from the graduate preparation programs.

Rather than limiting his hiring pool to just those who have completed a student affairs graduate program, as a hiring manager, Jim is intentional about considering the transferable skills and experience that candidates can bring from various disciplines and with various experiences. Laura agrees with Jim that an advantage of the Canadian SAS profession is that it is populated by practitioners with a more diverse mix of educational and professional experiences than is the profession in the U.S.A. Laura declared:

> In Canada, I would make the distinction that it tends to be more of a hybrid of academically trained as a [SAS professional] and experiential development. So in the U.S.A., much more graduate student affairs, where in Canada we had so few of those, so it tends be a hybrid of people who have done those, in Canada or U.S.A., and people like myself, who went through in like psychology but just got into the profession through the backdoor, and I like that hybrid and result. My experience is that it gives, it's not quite so incestuous. I hear Americans sometimes say, they say they need more difference of opinion and diversity, and that's what the Canadian lens can bring to that.

This aspect of the Canadian profession, that practitioners arrive in SAS roles from diverse backgrounds, was mentioned by several other participants, and seems to be an important part of the Canadian identity of student affairs and services. As was obsefrved in Chapter 5, in the discussion about pathways to the profession, some SAS professionals do obtain graduate degrees in higher education or in student affairs and services specifically, but the majority of those who do pursue this credential, do so after having worked in an SAS role and gained some professional experience. This common pathway to a SAS graduate degree is distinct from the typical route in the United States, where students enter student affairs graduate programs without having any significant professional experience in the field, although many have student paraprofessional experience. Fiona commented on the advantage of the typical Canadian route to a SAS graduate degree program. She stated:

> For a lot of folks, they will be in professional practice for a number of years before they go get a graduate degree, and as someone who has taught graduate level courses, this is incredibly valuable, because when people are able to bring their actual experience, the praxis between the theory and their day to day work life, it's really fabulous, and they bring an enormous amount of insight because they are dealing with these issues on a daily basis.

Fiona continued:

> So I think in that respect there is really a fundamental difference in terms of professional preparation that has evolved in Canada, and frankly I would be a little bit sad to see us go the direction where people do an undergraduate degree, and then immediately go into grad school, and then get their first job. I think that that expectation, I don't think it necessarily provides the same richness in terms of the graduate experience because you're not bringing the same level of student affairs experience to the degree.

While Fiona speaks positively about the growing number of opportunities in Canada to earn a graduate degree with a focus on student affairs and services, she hopes the Canadian norm of gaining professional experience in the field prior to enrolling in such a degree is maintained. Fiona has both a masters and doctorate degree in higher education and has taught graduate courses student affairs, and she believes that having relevant professional experience is critical to getting the most out of a graduate degree, and makes for a superior learning experience compared to simply entering the program directly after one's undergraduate degree. For the profession to shift to the American model of professional preparation would be, according to Fiona, losing part of what makes SAS professionals in Canada distinctive.

Something About Our Canadian Identity That Kills Me

When comparing Canadian student affairs and services with the profession in the United States, most participants in this study spoke about the distinctiveness of Canadian student affairs in a positive light, citing various aspects of the Canadian profession that stand out as advantages. As explained above, Barry did share his opinion that SAS in the U.S.A. is more professional than in Canada, and while no other participants stated this opinion, several did indicate it as a narrative they often hear from colleagues. Kara spoke about how she finds the comparisons that she hears being made about the two national contexts to be troubling in some respects:

> And I think that there's something about our Canadian identity that still, it kills me, it bugs me so much. Because it's still comparing instead of learning. And I, you know, I carry a circle of exchange, versus, well "you're just better" or "I'm just inferior." You know? And I think that plays out very big level, macro level,

> "oh my god we're just inferior and we just got competencies, and NASPA and ACPA have had competencies forever"

Kara continued:

> And I think I would like to see our profession and our professional identity as a country just stand up and say we're good, so that we're able to look at our development with the context of how can we enhance what we're already good at? Right? […] This goes back to an abundance model or a deficit model. So, we're abundant! We're awesome! We're great! We're passionate! We love each other, like, all these things where we're great, and then here are very real gaps that we're going to try and fill and work on.

Kara expressed that she becomes frustrated when she hears the narrative of Canadian student affairs being inferior to the profession in the United States. Rather than a preoccupation with comparing the nature of SAS in Canada and the United States, Kara prefers to celebrate the strengths of the Canadian profession while also acknowledging gaps with the goal of continuous improvement.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

A variety of factors were identified as having a distinct impact on the nature of one's professional identity development, including: mentors; professional associations; graduate education; supervisor support; gender, race, and ethnicity; geography; Francophone institutions; institutional type; and organizational leadership. Additionally, for many participants, their identity as a Canadian and their conception of distinctive Canadian aspects of student affairs and services played a significant role in their overall professional identity.

Chapter 8:

Conclusion

In this research study, I sought to advance knowledge about the professional identity of student affairs and services professionals in Canada. Given the dearth of previous research on this topic in the Canadian context, this project serves as a foundational study on which future investigations can build. The intent of this project has been to interpret the nature and context of professional identity as seen through the eyes of Canadian SAS professionals and to contribute to the knowledge base of the Canadian SAS profession. I examined various aspects of the professional identity of 25 student affairs and services practitioners at Canadian colleges and universities across 10 provinces and two territories. This study was framed in identity theory from the symbolic interactionist perspective, focused on the meanings participants attach to being SAS practitioners and, therefore, the ways in which they view themselves in this role. The specific research questions addressed were: (1) How do Canadian SAS practitioners make meaning of their professional identity? (2) How does their understanding of their professional identity impact their approach to their work? (3) What factors influence the development of professional identity among Canadian SAS practitioners?

The introduction of this dissertation explained the importance of better understanding professional identities of student affairs and services practitioners in Canada given the significant influence these professionals have on post-secondary students on campuses across the country. The data and analysis presented in the three preceding chapters included an exploration of the participants' pathways to a career in SAS. The

misconceptions others have about their roles commonly encountered by participants were discussed, in addition to the sense of professional marginalization participants experience on their campuses. The participants' conceptions of their professional identity was discussed, examining their identity meanings and the multiple identities they claim. The various factors participants cited as influential in their construction of professional identity were identified, and Chapter 7 closed with a discussion about how participants' Canadian identity may play a contextual role in their overall professional identity. In this final chapter, I provide a summary and synthesis of the findings; discuss this study's implications for professional practice; and identify areas of future research suggested by this study.

SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

The major findings of this study relate to the three research questions outlined in the introduction and reiterated above. I will first discuss the findings relevant to explaining how participants make meaning of their professional identities and how these understandings impact their work, thereby answering research questions 1 and 2. Following the summary of participants' primary professional identities, their identity meanings, and sub-identities, I summarize the findings related to research question 3 with a discussion of the factors that played a role in the development of participants' professional identities.

Primary Professional Identities, Identity Meanings, and Sub-identities

For the participants based at Anglophone institutions, the professional identity label of "student affairs professional" was claimed by all, and was indeed the primary

professional identity for all but one of these participants. Not only did these participants all use this same description for their professional roles, many did so with a sense of absolute certainty and pride. Certainty claims regarding their identity as a student affairs professional such as "100%," "absolutely," and "for sure," were common even though I did not ask about their certainty nor did I probe for this type of qualification. Comments like these contributed to the distinct sense of pride for the SAS profession that I detected throughout many of the interviews. While the variability of and confusion about terminology in the profession has been noted in previous research and commentary about SAS in Canada (e.g., Browne et al., 2015; Siefert, 2011), the 22 participants at Anglophone colleges and universities were unanimous in their usage of student affairs, rather than the term student services, for example, to describe both the profession and their own professional identity. This is particularly notable in the Canadian context given the national professional association, CACUSS, uses "student services" in its name, and the landmark Canadian book by Hardy-Cox and Strange (2010) uses "student services" rather than "student affairs" in its title and throughout the edited chapters. The identification with the "student affairs" label by participants in this study may indicate the growing professionalism of the field in Canada, and a clear shift away from a transactional service-delivery mentality to a philosophy of holistic education firmly grounded in theory and directed at student learning. A further indication of this current shift in how Canadian SAS professionals understand their roles may be seen in the unrealized predictions of Samantha and Jim, who both suggested that many, and perhaps most, SAS professionals would not actually hold such a primary professional identity. Their contention was that the majority

of their colleagues in the field would identify first with an alternative professional affiliation. While this may have been true 10 or even just five years ago, the results of this study provide at least some indication that the recent work by CACUSS to further professionalize the field, the growing number of SAS practitioners completing specialized graduate degrees, and the increasing scholarship in the field may collectively be responsible for a heightened sense of the professional status of SAS and a more distinct professional identity among Canadian SAS professionals.

This study's three participants from Francophone institutions in Québec, however, did not identity as either student affairs or student services professionals, each claiming alternative professional identities. This suggests a Francophone-Anglophone divide in Canadian student affairs and services, a gulf that was specifically described by the Francophone participants in this study as well as by the sole participant based at an Anglophone institution in Québec. The data revealed an uneasiness among SAS practitioners at Francophone institutions in Québec with the idea of being a student affairs and services professional or with the notion of professional identity in SAS. Reasons for this disconnect suggested by the data include the more bureaucratic nature of Québec SAS and the relative lack of engagement between CACUSS and Francophone professionals. In contrast to the way the 22 Anglophone participants described their professional identity, the dominant conception expressed by the Francophone participants of their SAS role was as a manager, director, or administrator. This conception suggests, as does the participants' associated extended comments, that these professionals approach their work more from a service-delivery perspective rather than with a holistic student development lens.

Identity theory was particularly well suited to frame this study due to its strong focus on meaning. According to this study's theoretical framework, identity is what it means to be who one is; that is, the set of meanings that define who one is (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker, 1980). Using identity theory as a guide, this study defines student affairs and services professional identity as what it means to be a SAS professional. For those participants whose professional identity was squarely positioned as a SAS professional, various identity meanings were explored to further explicate this conception. Identity meanings that emerged from participants' descriptions included: holistic approach, outside the classroom, linking theory and practice, citizenship development, and professionalism of the field.

Identity theorists closely focus on the roles that an individual plays, called role identities. Role identities are learned from shared cultural knowledge, personal experiences, and negotiating meanings through interactions (Burke, 2003). This study's data revealed SAS practitioners embracing multiple professional identities, that is, multiple role identities in the workplace, which for most participants were conceptualized as sub-identities or components of their overall professional identity as a student affairs professional. The sub-identities which emerged from participants' descriptions included: servant, leader, administrator, adviser, educator, and counsellor. Identity theory allows us to take multiple role identities into account, acknowledging that individuals may have one for each of the many positions they hold or functions they carry out in a complex society or institutional setting. Depending on the specific person and the context in which they were operating, a participant's multiple sub-identities were ranked at varying levels of

identity prominence (internalized importance of an identity) and identity salience (likelihood that a given identity will be enacted across contexts and situations). This study demonstrated that salience and prominence are distinct self-processes. In Sophie's case, for example, it was apparent that while she ranks her educator identity high in prominence, this sub-identity does not have a corresponding high ranking in salience, as Sophie chooses not to enact her educator identity when collaborating with faculty. While often conflated in research, treating these self-processes as theoretically discrete is important in order to account for the distinct, though correlated, effects that each process has on the self. When we investigate and discuss professional identity while recognizing both identity prominence and salience, we are acknowledging not only a person's individual agency, but also the various constraints and pressures particular social settings, relationships, and other contextual factors may present.

Contributing Factors: Experiences and Context

As revealed by identity theory, professional identity is not a constant, but is rather in a state of flux, continually evolving and changing throughout the course of one's career in response to a myriad of influencing factors. Individuals learn to internalize social expectations through interaction, learn to play roles and adapt their roles to meet their own needs, while also being socialized into the roles demanded by others. Eventually, according to interactionists, the role becomes internalized and is integrated into the self. The present research identified a variety of factors as having a distinct impact on the nature of one's professional identity development, including: mentors; professional associations; graduate education; supervisor support; gender, race, and ethnicity; geography;

Francophone institutions; institutional type; and organizational leadership. While differing pathways to the SAS profession were not associated with different professional identity conceptions, one's route to the profession certainly did impact the timing of one's point of realization and thus the timing of one's full understanding of his or her professional identity. Those who arrive to a career in SAS directly, most often stemming from experience gained as an undergraduate student leader, have a clear concept of the profession from the beginning due to early encounters with SAS professionals in their student leadership roles. Individuals whose career paths follow a less direct line, and thus enter the SAS profession indirectly, typically have later points of realization. These SAS practitioners may not arrive at a full understanding of the nature of the field until acquiring a couple years of experience in a student affairs and services role.

The regularity with which SAS professionals are faced with misconceptions and a lack of awareness about their jobs poses challenges for the verification of their professional identities. Participants in this study shared the frustration they often experience when friends, family members, and new acquaintances fundamentally misunderstand their professional roles. Having one's professional role largely misunderstood by others may lead oneself or others to question the value of one's role, with negative consequences to one's conception of their professional identity. Student affairs and services practitioners on Canadian campuses also often face professional marginalization, particularly due to behaviour and comments from members of faculty. When members of faculty and other higher education professionals demonstrate a lack of value and respect for the work of SAS practitioners, the professional identity of these practitioners may be harmed. Conversely,

as a result of both misconceptions and marginalization, the need to consistently explain the basic functions and defend the purposes of one's job may have the unexpected effect of actually strengthening one's own conception of their professional self. How a SAS professional responds to these situations is obviously important in determining the consequences.

Aspects of the Canadian SAS profession that are distinctive from the field in other contexts, particularly the United States, also play a role in the professional identity of some Canadian SAS practitioners. Participants in this study cited the following distinctive features of Canadian SAS with implications for their approach to their work: tolerance and inclusiveness, student mental health supports, support for aboriginal learners, a nationwide professional connectedness, and the nature of professional preparation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

As the first major empirical study of professional identity in Canadian student affairs and services, this research offers several important implications for SAS practice in Canada. Participant testimonies in this study suggest that universities and colleges should consider providing an overview of the student affairs and services profession during staff recruitment, orientation of new professionals, and/or professional development sessions. As has been discussed, many individuals enter the SAS field in Canada indirectly, often having never before considered a career in SAS and sometimes having never heard of the profession. Especially for these individuals, having the opportunity to learn about and be exposed to the nature of the wider profession at an early point would foster socialization into the profession, and enable the development of a clear professional identity. This could

help new SAS staff to more quickly understand the variety of roles they can play in serving, supporting, and educating students. Rather than leaving new SAS practitioners to stumble onto a realization of the profession on their own, or relying on the possibility that newly acquired mentors will lead them to a fuller understanding, institutions should be intentional about socializing new SAS staff into the profession in order to bolster their sense of professional identity and result in being more confident and effective SAS professionals.

This research has revealed that SAS professionals on Canadian campuses claim multiple role identities, often conceptualized as sub-identities, perhaps more so than any other subset of higher education professionals. Balancing seemingly competing interests or priorities for one's multiple identities, or suppressing one or more identities in order to make another one more salient in a particular context can pose challenges and leave individuals feeling overwhelmed and conflicted. Student affairs and services professionals may, in order to get by on a day-to-day basis, choose to activate their multiple identities one at a time. This was evident in the way Jeanine structured her multiple identities, conceiving of her psychologist and manager identities as separate, activating one or the other depending on which one a particular situation demanded. Paul, whose multiple identities included that of educator, felt conflicted when his role required sanctioning students for violations of community standards. Preferring to identify as an educator rather than a disciplinarian, Paul uses his interactions with students as opportunities to advance their learning, but admits to experiencing challenges with certain interactions when his authoritarian role must take precedence. In another example, Sophie turns on and off her educator identity depending on the context in an effort to simplify her approach to

collaboration with various groups. Such overly simplistic identity structures may not be optimal when situations call for the co-activation of multiple professional identities. As Caza and Creary (2016) have noted, there are positive benefits when individuals feel comfortable in co-activating their multiple professional identities. Individuals with more complex professional identity structures, and those "who have considered the intersection and distinction between these identities, are likely to be better prepared to deal with situational co-activation of their identities" (p. 28). Given the benefits of professional identity complexity, it may be in the best interests of the SAS practitioner, the profession, and the institution to encourage complexity and co-activation of professional identities. One way in which institutions can do so is by helping professionals to focus on identifying complementary professional areas and offering professional development opportunities targeting these. In doing so, SAS professionals may be better prepared to take a more interdisciplinary perspective towards their own profession. Another way that organizations and professions can encourage identity complexity, and even co-activation, is to become more accepting of creative new role combinations, dual reporting lines, and encouraging individuals to bring "their whole selves" into work (Creary et al., 2015). Doing so may enable individuals to celebrate their diversity in interests, backgrounds, and other identities, and allow these to be seen as relevant and important in the workplace.

This research points to the need for institutions to better support faculty-staff partnerships. Of the various sub-identities described by participants, the educator identity was one of the most common and also one of the most prominent. This study has shown that many student affairs and services professionals in Canada align their work around

supporting student learning and holistic development. As educators, SAS professionals conceive of their role as one in partnership with faculty and other post-secondary education professionals, aimed at the joint goal of educating students. However, student affairs and services professionals at Canadian institutions, particularly universities, report feeling unappreciated and undervalued by faculty members. Such attitudes, whether real or perceived, can get in the way of productive collaboration. If faculty members do not recognize and value student affairs and services professionals as educators, they may be less likely to partner with them in either classroom-based or outside-the-classroom activities. There is a need for faculty members to better appreciate the role SAS professionals can play in supporting student learning. Shifting institutional culture such that partnerships between faculty members and SAS staff become more of the norm would help to more effectively harness the full talents of SAS professionals as educators.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation represents a foundational exploration of professional identity in Canadian student affairs and services. While this research has made several important contributions as previously outlined in this chapter, this single project does not claim to have fully explored all aspects and factors relating to professional identity in the Canadian SAS profession. For example, there is much more to investigate relating to differences that language contexts may present for Canadian student affairs and services. In addition, the roles of various social identities in one's professional identity construction should be more specifically explored in future research, with attention given to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, for example.

This study represents one of the very few studies about any aspect of Canadian student affairs and services which was attentive to both Anglophone and Francophone experiences. While this research has provided significant insight into SAS within Francophone contexts, further study is needed to explore more fully the nature of SAS at French-language institutions in Canada. In addition to investigating SAS within Québec, future research should also consider the nature of the profession at Canadian Francophone institutions outside of Québec. Recognizing that differing language contexts bring with them various value systems, worldviews, histories, and political orientations, future research should carefully consider the role these factors may play in professional identity in student affairs and services.

Another area for continuing research in professional identity in SAS is examining how people of differing racial, ethnic, gender, and other social identities may form professional identity. This study included only four participants who identified their race as something other than White, and while a few relevant comments were shared by participants regarding racial identity, more focused investigations are needed to explore these nuances. Similarly, while this study included both male and female participants, and gender identity was mentioned by several individuals as a factor in their professional lives, further research is needed to more fully explore aspects of professional identity in Canadian SAS through the lens of gender.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT EMAIL MESSAGES

Email to Gatekeepers

Hello <gatekeeper>,

I hope this email finds you well. I am a current doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Administration program at the University of Texas at Austin, and I am conducting a study on the professional identity of Canadian student affairs and services practitioners. I am seeking student affairs and services personnel at Canadian universities who have worked in the field for at least five years. If you know anyone who fits this description who you think might be willing to talk to me about their experiences, please forward their contact information to me (email or phone number). Please feel free to forward this email to any of your colleagues who you think might also be able to recommend individuals willing to participate.

This study had been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at Austin.

Thank you for your time,

Kyle D. Massey
kyle.massey@utexas.edu

Email to Potential Participant [English]

Hello <first name>,

My name is Kyle Massey and I am a current doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Administration program at the University of Texas. You were recommended to me by <gatekeeper> for an upcoming research study that I am conducting that explores the professional identities of Canadian student affairs and services practitioners. He/She said you would be an excellent resource, so I would love to hear more about your experiences and thoughts about your professional field.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview with me over Skype at a time convenient for you. Participation in this research study is strictly voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any question at any time without penalty. Should you decide to participate, you will receive a pseudonym and your identity will be kept confidential.

I would like to thank you in advance for your participation and willingness to aid in the study of Canadian student affairs and services personnel and their professional identities.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating, and we can find a time to connect soon to talk more about the project.

Thank you!

Kyle Massey
kyle.massey@utexas.edu

Email to Potential Participant [French]

Bonjour <nom>,

Je m'appelle Kyle Massey et je prépare mon doctorat dans un programme d'administration de l'enseignement supérieur avec l'University of Texas. Vous m'avez été recommandé(e) par «nom» pour m'aider dans une étude de recherche que je mène actuellement sur les identités professionnelles des administrateurs canadiens des affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants.

«Nom» m'a dit que vous seriez une excellente ressource et j'aimerais beaucoup connaitre vos expériences et opinions sur les affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants au Canada.

Si vous acceptez de participer à cette étude, je vous demanderai de remplir un petit questionnaire en ligne et ensuite, de prendre part à un entretien individuel par Skype lorsque cela vous conviendra. Votre participation à cette étude est purement volontaire et vous pouvez refuser de répondre à toute question, à tout moment, sans aucune pénalité. Si vous décidez de participer à l'étude, vous choisirez un pseudonyme et votre identité demeurera confidentielle.

J'aimerais vous remercier à l'avance de votre participation et d'avoir accepté de m'assister dans le développement de cette étude sur le personnel canadien des Affaires étudiantes et son identité professionnelle.

Veuillez, s'il vous plait, me faire savoir si vous êtes intéressé(e) à participer à cette étude et nous trouverons un moment pour entrer en contact rapidement et discuter plus profondément de ce projet.

Merci,

Kyle Massey
kyle.massey@utexas.edu

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM - ENGLISH

Consent Form

Title: Professional Identity in Canadian Student Affairs and Services

Conducted by: Kyle D. Massey, kyle.massey@utexas.edu

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about the professional identity of Canadian student affairs and services administrators. The purpose of this study is investigate what it means to be a student affairs and services practitioner from the perspective of these professionals in Canada.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to

- Complete a pre-interview questionnaire to obtain basic personal and professional information about you prior to our interview. Your identity will be kept confidential.
- Participate in a one-on-one audio-recorded interview using Skype with the researcher.
- Review what I write about what you shared with me and offer any further feedback about my interpretations.

The pre-interview questionnaire will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete, and the interview will be approximately 75 minutes in length. Note that the interview will be audio-recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however you may enjoy the opportunity to share your insights and stories related to your professional life, giving you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences in meaningful ways. This study will benefit the field of student affairs and services in Canada.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will

not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate please sign this form, scan it, and email it back to me.

Will there be any compensation?

You will not receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study?

Your privacy and the confidentiality of your data will be protected by the use of a pseudonym, rather than your real name. The audio recording of your interview, the typed transcript, and my own notes will be kept secured on my password protected laptop and in my home. All files will be labeled with a pseudonym so that you are not identifiable.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept until the completion of this dissertation and any related publications to follow, after which time they will be erased.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during, or after your participation you can contact the researcher, Kyle Massey, by telephone at 709-351-4978 or send an email to kyle.massey@utexas.edu for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

If you agree to participate please sign this form, scan it, and email it back to me at kyle.massey@utexas.edu.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at

any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

_____

Printed Name

_____ _____

Signature Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

_____

Print Name of Person obtaining consent

_____ _____

Signature of Person obtaining consent Date

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM - FRENCH

Formulaire de Consentement

Titre: Identité professionnelle au sein des Affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants canadiens

Etude menée par: Kyle D. Massey, kyle.massey@utexas.edu

Le but de ce formulaire est de vous fournir des informations qui pourraient influencer votre décision de participer ou non à cette étude. La personne qui la mène répondra à toutes vos questions quelle que soit leur nature. Veuillez lire les informations ci-dessous et poser toutes les questions que vous pourriez avoir avant de prendre votre décision. Si vous choisissez de participer à cette étude, ce questionnaire servira à officialiser votre consentement.

But de l'étude

On vous a demandé de participer à une étude sur l'identité professionnelle des administrateurs canadiens des Affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants. Le but de cette étude est d'enquêter sur ce que cela représente d'être un administrateur des Affaires étudiantes et de services aux étudiants du point de vue de ces professionnels au Canada.

Qu'attend-on de vous?

Si vous acceptez de participer à cette étude, on vous demandera de:

- remplir un questionnaire de pré-entretien afin que vous puissiez me fournir quelques informations personnelles et professionnelles de base avant cet entretien. Votre identité demeurera confidentielle**.**
- participer à un entretien (enregistré en audio) par Skype ou par téléphone avec le chercheur.
- réviser ce que j'aurai écrit sur ce que vous m'aurez dit et m'offrir vos commentaires sur mes interprétations.

Cela vous prendra environ 10 minutes pour remplir le questionnaire de pré-entretien et l'entretien lui-même durera environ 60 minutes. Veuillez noter que cet entretien sera enregistré en audio.

Quels sont les risques impliqués dans cette étude?

Les risques sont minimaux, pas plus importants que ceux de la vie courante.

Quels sont les bénéfices potentiels de cette étude?

Vous ne retirerez pas de bénéfices directs de votre participation à cette étude. Cependant, il est possible que vous appréciiez l'occasion qu'elle vous donnera de partager vos points de vue, les histoires de votre vie professionnelle ainsi que l'occasion de réfléchir sur vos expériences d'une manière significative. Cette étude sera bénéfique au domaine des Affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants au Canada.

Est-il obligatoire de participer à l'étude?

Non, votre participation est volontaire. Vous pouvez très bien décider de ne pas y participer du tout, ou si vous avez déjà commencé, vous pourrez y renoncer à n'importe quel moment. Votre retrait de l'étude ou votre refus d'y participer n'affectera en rien vos rapports avec l'University of Texas at Austin (University). Si vous décidez de participer à l'étude, veuillez signer ce formulaire, le scanner et me le renvoyer par courriel.

Y-aura-t-il une rémunération ?

Vous ne recevrez aucune rémunération pour avoir participé à cette étude.

Comment votre vie privée et vos propos confidentiels seront-ils protégés lors de cette étude?

Votre vie privée et vos propos confidentiels seront protégés par votre utilisation d'un pseudonyme plutôt que de votre propre nom. L'enregistrement audio de votre entretien, son manuscrit et mes propres notes seront sécurisés sur mon ordinateur portable chez moi. Tous les fichiers porteront le nom de votre pseudonyme pour que vous ne puissiez pas être identifie(e).

S'il devenait nécessaire que le Comité d'examen institutionnel révise les dossiers de l'étude, les informations qui pourraient vous être reliées seront protégées autant que la loi le permette. Vos dossiers ne seront pas transmis sans votre accord préalable à moins que la loi ou une ordonnance de tribunal ne l'exige. Les données résultant de votre participation pourraient être partagées plus tard avec d'autres chercheurs afin de les aider dans leurs propres recherches dont ce formulaire de consentement ne parle pas. Dans ces cas, les données ne contiendront aucunes informations pouvant dévoiler votre identité ou votre participation à quelque étude.

Si vous décidez de participer à cette étude, votre voix sera enregistrée. Tout enregistrement audio sera gardé en sécurité et seul le chercheur y aura accès. Les enregistrements seront gardés jusqu'à ce que la thèse soit terminée, après quoi, ils seront effacés.

A qui adresser des questions sur cette étude ?

Avant, pendant et après votre participation, vous pouvez contacter le chercheur Kyle Massey, par téléphone au 709 351 4978 ou lui envoyer un courriel à kyle.massey@utexas.edu pour lui poser toutes les questions que vous désirez ou lui expliquez pourquoi vous vous sentez lésé(e).

Qui contacter si vous avez des questions relatives à vos droits en tant que participant à une étude?

Pour toute question concernant vos droits ou pour exprimer votre insatisfaction par rapport à quelque aspect de cette étude, vous pouvez contacter, de façon anonyme si vous le désirez, le Comité d'examen institutionnel par téléphone au (512) 471-8871 ou envoyer un courriel à orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

Si vous acceptez de participer, veuillez signez ce formulaire et me le renvoyer par courriel à kyle.massey@utexas.edu.

Signature

On vous a expliqué le but, les procédures, les bénéfices et risques potentiels de cette étude et vous avez reçu une copie de ce formulaire. On vous a donné l'occasion de poser vos questions avant de signer et on vous a dit que vous pourriez en poser d'autres à n'importe quel moment. Vous acceptez volontairement de participer à cette étude. En signant ce formulaire vous ne renoncez à aucun de vos droits légaux.

_____

Nom imprimé

_____ _____

Signature Date

En tant que représentant de cette étude, j'ai expliqué l'objet, les procédures, les avantages et les risques associés à cette étude.

_____

Nom de la personne qui obtient le consentement

_____ _____

Signature de la personne qui obtient le consentement Date

APPENDIX D: PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE - ENGLISH

Q1 Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research about the professional identity of Canadian student affairs and services practitioners. This questionnaire is designed to obtain basic descriptive information about you, the work you do, and your educational history. This will help me get a sense of your experiences in advance of the Skype interview that we will complete soon. Your identity will always be kept confidential.

Q2 Have you read and signed the Consent Form, verifying that you agree to participate in this study?

- ☐ Yes, I have read and signed the Consent Form
- ☐ No, I have yet to read and sign the Consent Form

[IF Q2=No, THEN display Q3]

Q3 Please review the Consent Form that was emailed to you. Please return to this questionnaire after verifying you agree to participate in this study by returning a signed copy of the Consent Form to me. Thank you for your continued interest in this project.

[IF Q3 is displayed, THEN Skip to End]

Q4 Your name (your identity will remain confidential):

Q5 If you have a preferred pseudonym, please enter it here:

Q6 Please list all academic degrees/diplomas you have completed, including the level of degree/diploma, field of study, and institution:

Example: BA, Psychology, University of Southern Canada

1st degree _____

2nd degree _____

3rd degree _____

4th degree _____

5th degree _____

Q7 Are you currently enrolled in or working towards any other degrees?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

[IF Q7=Yes, THEN display Q8]

Q8 Please tell me about the degree you are currently enrolled in or working towards (type/level, field of study, institution) :

Q9 Name of institution where you are employed:

Q10 Your current job title:

Q11 Please briefly describe your main responsibilities in this role:

Q12 Please list other professional roles (within student affairs or otherwise) you have had prior to your current role:

Q13 Number of years of experience in student affairs/services:

Q14 Your age:

Q15 Your gender identity:

Q16 How do you identify your race?

Q17 What language would you prefer for the interview?

- English
- French

Q18 What is your Skype name?

Q19 If there is anything else that you would like to share with me about yourself in advance of the interview, please feel free to do so here:

Thank you for completing this pre-interview questionnaire. I am looking forward to our Skype conversation.

APPENDIX E: PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE - FRENCH

Q1 Merci d'avoir accepté de participer à cette étude sur l'identité professionnelle des administrateurs canadiens des Affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants. Le but de ce questionnaire est de me fournir le plus d'informations possibles sur vous, votre travail et vos études. Cela me donnera une idée de vos expériences avant l'entretien par Skype que nous aurons bientôt. Votre identité demeurera confidentielle.

Q2 Avez-vous lu et signé le formulaire de consentement vérifiant que vous acceptez de participer à cette étude?

- ☐ Oui, je l'ai lu et signé.
- ☐ Non, je ne l'ai pas encore fait.

[Si Q2=Non, alors affichez Q3]

Q3 Veuillez relire le formulaire de consentement qui vous a été envoyé par courriel. Veuillez ensuite retourner à ce questionnaire après avoir vérifié que vous avez accepté de participer à cette étude et m'avez renvoyé une copie signée de ce formulaire. Merci encore de maintenir votre intérêt en ce projet.

[Si Q3 est affichée, veuillez aller tout de suite à la fin de ce document]

Q4 Quel est votre nom? (Votre identité demeurera confidentielle.)

Q5 Si vous préférez utiliser un pseudonyme, veuillez l'inscrire ici.

Q6 Veuillez faire la liste de tous les diplômes, certificats que vous avez obtenus ainsi que des niveaux de ces diplômes, certificats, le domaine de vos études et l'institution dans laquelle vous avez étudié.

Exemple: BA, Psychology, University of Southern Canada

Premier diplôme _____

Second diplôme _____

Troisième diplôme _____

Quatrième diplôme _____

Cinquième diplôme _____

Q7 Etes-vous inscrit(e) à un autre programme, étudiez-vous présentement pour obtenir un autre diplôme?

- ☐ Oui

- Non

[Si Q7=Oui, veuillez passer à Q8]

Q8 Veuillez me décrire ce future diplôme (type, niveau, domaine, institution)

Q9 Dans quelle institution travaillez-vous?

Q10 Quel est le titre de votre position?

Q11 Veuillez brièvement décrire vos responsabilités dans ce rôle:

Q13 Veuillez inscrire la liste des autres rôles professionnels que vous avez joués (dans le cadre des affaires étudiantes ou dans d'autres) avant d'avoir occupé votre rôle actuel?

Q13 Depuis combien d'années travaillez-vous dans le domaine des affaires étudiantes?

Q14 Quel âge avez-vous?

Q15 Quelle est votre identité de genre?

Q16 A quelle race appartenez-vous?

Q17 Quelle langue préférez-vous pour l'entrevue?

- Anglais
- Français

Q18 Quel est votre nom Skype?

Q19 Y-a-t-t-il autre chose, vous concernant, dont vous aimeriez me faire part avant notre entretien? N'hésitez-pas à m'en informer.

Merci d'avoir répondu à ce questionnaire. J'attends notre conversation avec impatience.

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE - ENGLISH

1. Tell me about your pathway into student affairs and services.
    a. What attracted you to the field?
    b. Tell me about your current role.
2. How do you describe your profession to others?
    a. How do describe student affairs and services to faculty?
    b. How do you describe what you do to family and friends?
3. How would you describe your professional identity?
    a. Would you describe yourself as a student affairs and services professional? Why/why not?
    b. What does it mean to be a student affairs and services professional?
4. What experiences helped you to shape your professional identity?
    a. Were you involved with student affairs and services programs as an undergraduate?
    b. Have you taken graduate courses that influenced how you understand your professional identity? – Can you describe the courses, when did you take them, and how do they impact you today?
    c. Is there/was there a strong mentor(s) that shape your professional development?
    d. What has been your involvement in professional associations (e.g., CACUSS, ACPA, NASPA, regional associations, etc.), and how has this experience influenced your professional identity?
5. How would you describe the nature of student affairs and services nationally?
    a. Do you think there is anything distinctive about the profession in Canada, as compared to the profession elsewhere? If so, what?
    b. In what ways do these distinctive features of the profession in Canada impact your conception of your professional identity?
6. How do your personal and professional lives impact each other?
    a. Do you try to keep them separate? – Why? How?
    b. Do they overlap? In what ways? How does that impact you?
7. How does the context of your particular institution influence your role as a student affairs and services practitioner?
    a. Is student affairs and services work supported by senior administration? – Can you discuss how this impacts how you feel about your work?

    b. Do faculty members understand what you do? Do they regard it as important? How does this impact how you think about your work?

8. In your opinion, what are the most important qualities or attributes of a student affairs and services professional?
    a. Which of these attributes do you identify with?
    b. Are there some areas in which you feel you need continued growth and development? – How do you plan to develop these qualities or attributes?
9. How would you describe the role of the university/college sector in contemporary Canadian society?
    a. What role do student affair and services professionals play in this? Can you give me an example from your experience specifically?
    b. How does the mission of your university/college reflect the role of the university/college sector? How does your work contribute to the mission of your university/college?
10. Are there any other factors that shape your professional identity that we have not covered today?

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE - FRENCH

1. Expliquez-moi ce qui vous a amené (e) à travailler dans le cadre des affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants?
    a. Qu'est-ce qui vous a attiré(e) dans ce domaine?
    b. Parlez-moi de votre position actuelle**.**
2. Comment décrivez-vous votre profession aux autres?
    a. Comment décrivez-vous les affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants aux membres de la faculté?
    b. Comment décrivez-vous ce que vous faites à vos amis et à votre famille?
3. Comment décririez-vous votre identité professionnelle?
    a. Vous décririez-vous comme un(e) professionnel(le) des affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants? Pourquoi/pourquoi pas?
    b. Que veut dire le fait d'être un(e) professionnel(le) des affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants?
4. Comment décririez-vous la nature des affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants sur le plan national?
    a. Pensez-vous que cette profession ait quelque chose de particulier au Canada par rapport à ce qu'elle représente ailleurs? Si oui, quoi?
    b. De quelle manière ces points distinctifs de la profession au Canada ont-ils un impact sur votre conception de votre identité professionnelle?
5. Quelles expériences vous ont aidé(e) a former votre identité professionnelle?
    a. Etiez-vous impliqué(e) dans des programmes d'affaires étudiantes et de services aux étudiants quand vous faisiez des études de premier cycle?
    b. Avez-vous suivi des cours d'études supérieures qui aient influencé la conception de votre identité professionnelle? – Pouvez-vous décrire ces cours, me dire quand vous les avez suivis et quel impact ils ont encore aujourd'hui sur vous?
    c. Avez-vous ou avez-vous eu un (des) mentor(s) qui ait (aient) formé votre identité professionnelle?
    d. Avez-vous été impliqué(e) dans des associations professionnelles (ASEUCC , ACPA, NASPA ou des associations régionales etc.) et comment cette expérience a-t-elle influencé votre identité professionnelle?
6. Quel effet votre vie personnelle et votre vie professionnelle ont-elles l'une sur l'autre?
    a. Vous assurez-vous de bien les séparer? Pourquoi? Comment?

b. Se chevauchent-elles? De quelles façons? Quels effets cela a-t-il sur vous**?**

7. Dans quelle mesure le contexte de votre institution influence-t-il votre rôle de praticien des affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants?
    a. Dans quelle mesure la haute administration soutient-elle les affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants? Pouvez-vous décrire l'influence de son attitude sur votre travail?
    b. Les membres de la faculté comprennent-ils ce que vous faites? Considèrent-ils ce travail comme important? Quelle influence cela a-t-il sur la façon dont vous envisagez votre travail?
8. Selon vous, quels sont les qualités ou les traits les plus importants d'un professionnel des affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants?
    a. Lesquels de ces traits pensez-vous posséder?
    b. Y a-t-il des domaines dans lesquels vous estimez devoir faire preuve de croissance, de développement ? Comment envisagez-vous de développer ces qualités, ces traits?
9. Comment décririez-vous le rôle du secteur universitaire dans la société canadienne contemporaine?
    a. Quel rôle les professionnels des affaires étudiantes et services aux étudiants y jouent-ils? Pourriez-vous m'en donner un exemple tiré de votre propre expérience?
    b. Comment la mission de votre université reflète-t-elle le rôle du secteur universitaire? Comment votre travail contribue-t-il à la mission de l'université?
10. Y-a-t-il d'autres facteurs qui forment votre identité professionnelle dont nous n'avons pas parlé aujourd'hui?

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